DEMOCRACY (NOUN) — A SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT BY THE WHOLE POPULATION, TYPICALLY THROUGH ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES.
PRODUCING A SEMIANNUAL MAGAZINE is a blessing and a curse in equal measure—especially so when we live in, shall we say, such interesting times.

It is often six months, sometimes more, between article assignments and publication. As such, we know we will never be covering breaking stories, and so we aim to stay above the news, as it were—to look at bigger pictures, to ask bigger questions than the ones that tie us down in daily struggles. That said, we also know we would be fools to believe that the current, the now, does not impact how we consider those bigger questions.

This year seems to have gone out of its way to prove that caveat true.

For example, we knew at the outset this issue would be reaching you in the immediate run-up to the election. Rather than offering comment on candidates or specific topics (there is no shortage of other outlets for that), we wanted to look at the evolving nature of politics itself (“Democracy’s Puzzling Paradox,” p. 22). How has it come to be that an exercise so optimistic and unifying in theory—the democratic election and elevation of our best and brightest to govern us—could in practice have become so dangerously divisive? Further, how might we remind ourselves of all that we share (“First Person, Plural,” p. 18)?

What we could never have imagined would be a summer of such unrest filling that gap between assignment and publication, further entrenching Them from Us, and underscoring the dire need to remind ourselves that every one of Us is someone else’s Them.

Likewise, we knew we wanted to mark the fifth anniversary of Laudato si’, Pope Francis’ encyclical calling on

us all to assume the responsibilities of our God-given role as stewards of Creation (“...To Replenish the Earth,” p. 28). We never anticipated just how prescient 2020 would prove such an article to be. Then the entire western quarter of the United States found itself quite literally engulfed in smoke from almost unfathomably expansive and destructive wildfires. Meanwhile, for only the second time in history, forecasters have had to resort to the Greek alphabet to name storms since the World Meteorological Organization has exhausted its list of names for the year—and the season is only halfway through.

Closer to home, we wanted to recognize the arrival of a new dean and an exciting new chapter for the College of Health Professions. Little did we know what definition of “exciting” we would be employing (“This Is Not a Drill,” p. 32).

It’s amazing even to us how timely our attempt to remain timeless has proven to be. Then again, in a year that has never failed to remind us how very small we all are in the greater scheme of things, and yet how very significant, it seems somehow right.

Perhaps the lesson here, in this issue and in this year, is that we are our best when we are both.
JULIAN VOSS-ANDREAE’S SCULPTURAL INSTALLATION SPANNUNGSFELD FOR SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY IS INSPIRED BY A VIEW OF THE HUMAN BODY THROUGH THE LENS OF QUANTUM PHYSICS.
In times of crisis, it’s natural for people to reflect a little more closely on the world around them and their role in it. They want to know that what they do matters, that their work has an impact, and that they can—and do—make a difference in the lives they touch. As such, it’s not surprising that, in spite of the challenges facing higher education in general, Sacred Heart recently welcomed its largest freshman class ever. SHU’s very tangible sense of mission and commitment to service have proven once more to be not only a reassurance, but an inspiration, in uncertain times.

Then again, we are Pioneers. Resilience is what we do. **TEACHING EVOLUTION**

The old schoolhouse on the hill isn’t what it used to be…

**FORWARD**

“When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.”

-Audre Lorde

Talking at a person is not the same as communicating with them, just as throwing a ball in someone’s direction is not the same as playing catch. If you’re a parent teaching a child the fundamentals of the game or a major league outfielder hoping to make the play at home, you tailor your throw to the person on the receiving end. If you want to communicate, you need to consider your audience. 

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past few years.

For a start, it’s become abundantly clear that there is no one-size-fits-all modality when it comes to learning. Individuals learn differently from other individuals. Different cultures have dif-

ferent value structures. Different socio-

economic strati have different resources

and expectations. “All of which impact

how people learn and, more important-

ly,” Alfano says, “how teachers should be

teaching.”

Furthermore, that traditional rigidity doesn’t reflect the changing world today’s young people inhabit and will inherit where adaptability is key. “Curriculums

are now being built with developmental

appropriateness and cultural relevance in mind so part of education is learning how to navigate a social world. We’re engaging kids as innate problem solvers now, tapping into their creativity with

STEM tools so that more than anything they’re learning how to think.”

Thus, education becomes more about the mind’s pliability—the practice of thinking. Hard facts still have value, of course, but they are increasingly valued as tools and not as an end in themselves.

Perhaps the most exciting element of this paradigm shift is the potential it cre-

ates to move education towards a better place of equity and social justice: “The accident of birth of bright young people is a truth frontline teachers witness every day,” Alfano says. Meaning intelligence does not preselect opportunity, and in many impoverished communities, opportunity is decidedly thin on the ground.

Alfano is not daunted.

“Social justice is nothing new to the teacher-ed program,” says Alfano. “To be honest, it’s one of the reasons I came to SHU! A social mission is core to the work we do here. We look to become part of the solution.”

One way that can happen is recognizing that, while human nature seeks instant gratification, the social and educational issues teachers seek to address take decades, if not generations, to fully realize change. In communities that already place a high value on edu-

cation, that timeframe is less critical. In under-resourced communities, howev-

er, with fewer after-school or summer programs to help learning take root, or where there are fewer models to exem-

plify the importance and benefits of per-

severing in education, finding a means to answer that craving of gratification is imperative to its success. Here, altering the emphasis from what you don’t know to what you can do makes education much more about the carrot and much less about the stick.

“I’m cautiously optimistic,” Alfano says, which really is no surprise. Teachers are the parent profession of all other professions, the very nature of their job is to every day invest once again in the future, and they have always been—just like a parent tossing a ball to a child or an outfielder making that long throw hom—optimists by nature. 

The same goes for teaching.

“For the longest time, school was the place children went to accumulate knowl-

edge—to learn their times tables and vocabulary and to memorize their dates in history. But the times have changed.

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her technical courses. She refreshed her existing online materials, spent long hours creating relevant new content and made sure to keep her Webex office hours. “It was a huge change,” she says. Recalling her first online meeting with a class she’d come to know in person, “I said, ‘I miss you all, guys!’”

The challenges facing higher education across the nation were unprecedented. Michels has likened it to emergency room triage, noting that the monumental task of moving every single class to an online-only format was by necessity happening at the very same time the University was dealing with risk management, health, safety and legal concerns—and helping 4,000 students just back from spring break pack their bags to leave campus, uncertain when they might safely return.

Of course, faculty weren’t the only ones standing on shifting sand. Students needed guidance navigating formidable online course loads with classmates they suddenly only saw in Webex meetings. Students needed guidance navigating formidable online course loads with classmates they suddenly only saw in Webex meetings. In response, the Student Success Center created crucial content for students on how to talk to professors about expectations, unique situations and possible incompletes and how to stay organized to succeed while away from school. Sean Heffron, the center’s executive director, says advisers offered help on everything from making wise fall course selections to how and where to study at home for best retention of information.

Like most of SHU’s 900 professors, Sidney Gottlieb thrives on dynamic interaction with his students. He’s been teaching at SHU since 1976 and is “very committed to face-to-face learning,” he says. “You lose a little bit by not breathing the same air, but these days that’s dangerous.”

So it was that Gottlieb was among the first to head to the Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching (CET) for the tutorials offered to teachers not familiar with online course creation. Center staff, librarians and academic computing experts helped more than 90 professors fine-tune their lectures, schedule student meetings and virtual office hours, set consistent transparent objectives and better understand Blackboard, Webex and the other tools at their disposal, Michels says.

In needing to shift from classes focused on traditional live lectures, some professors “flipped” their classrooms, creating online lectures students could view on their own so that when they logged in for group discussions, they were primed to arrive with pointed questions and savvy comments. “It probably helped that we had already laid down a good groundwork for working together in the first part of the semester,” Gottlieb says, so that moving online, “the students literally didn’t miss a beat.”

Indeed, far from being daunted by the experience, roughly double the usual number of students registered for online summer courses to keep themselves on track for their goals.

While it was certainly not the semester anyone anticipated back in January, Michels is proud to point out that professors received high marks overall on end-of-semester student surveys. “The numbers were as good as if not better than usual,” he says, noting that students seemed to appreciate the extra care professors put into the semester and showed an impressively mature sense of camaraderie with faculty and their peers. “People who’ve never taught online before might think it’s easier—and it’s not. It’s not just about tools. It’s about teaching well.”

HOW TO KEEP FOCUS
WHEN HOME AND
HOMEROOM ARE ONE
AND THE SAME

Pioneering the distance learning frontier with a webinar serving parents and teachers alike.

TEACHING AT HOME
In March, as stay-at-home orders emptied schools and campuses across the country and around the world, Sacred Heart’s campus became a rather strange place. As a collective, Pioneers aren’t very good at sitting still. Especially in times of need, SHU students, faculty and staff have something of a reputation for rolling up their sleeves and stepping forward. Thus the quiet of campus was rather unsettling. It also highlighted an arena in which Sacred Heart could be of particular service to the larger community because, of course, it wasn’t only SHU’s campus that was void of life. Students everywhere and at every level, from preschoolers to doctoral candidates, were suddenly distance learning whether they were prepared for it or not.

Cue the Sacred Heart Alumni Association’s Facebook Live webinar, “We’re All Homeschooling Now,” featuring Fran Rabinowitz ’72, executive director of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, and Evelyn Russo, director of curriculum for Orange Public Schools, speaking with Michael Alfano, dean of the Isabelle Farrington College of Education. In the first 30-minute episode, the panel discussed how parents might best navigate this new educational landscape. One key takeaway for parents was to release themselves from the need to be perfect, and also to find learning in everyday tasks like washing dishes and to remember that there is even learning in play.

Over 2,500 people viewed the episode. “It became clear that people wanted to hear more,” says Bill Reidy, vice president for University Advancement. Themes began to emerge, such as when the educators spoke of routines and schedules and viewers raised questions about students with special needs. More episodes were conceived and added to accommodate the demand.

In each, guests listened to viewers’ comments and, in a living example of distance learning at its best, used their years of experience to offer guidance, help and knowledge. They spoke with empathy and reassurance for parents, many of whom were struggling to balance their children’s educational needs against their own work-from-home schedules and the stresses of childcare in quarantine and/or unemployment. “You’re not alone,” the experts told parents, reassuring them. “If your child doesn’t get eight or five or even two hours of learning on any given day, it will be okay.”

The discussions also helped other teachers unfamiliar with online learning tools or best practices in a digital classroom. Teacher and leadership preparation programs should continue to focus on preparing people for those roles, Alfano says, but the crisis made it abundantly clear that “any teacher or leadership preparation program worth its salt should also focus on technical issues such as distance learning pedagogy.”

Still, he is quick to note the mission-driven nature of teachers the world over. In these unprecedented times, he says, “an entire profession pivoted on a moment’s notice to expand its professional repertoire to meet the crisis head on.”

One key takeaway for parents was to release themselves from the need to be perfect.

KYLE MERBER is one of those people who were born to run—the 29-year-old helped set the world record in the men’s distance medley relay in 2015 and is currently training for the Olympics. His is a world measured by hundredths of a second where even the slightest injury or affliction can be the difference between winning the gold and needing to find a new job. Recovery, too, takes on added pressure. It’s not just a matter of comfort over discomfort. For an athlete of Merber’s caliber, the body needs to return to working perfectly.
In 2018, Merber underwent major surgery for a sports hernia. Doctors were able to repair the injury, but even after months of recovery and a cautious return to training, Merber could feel his stride was off. With the Olympics looming, the New York native turned to SHU’s exercise science professors Matthew Moran and Justin Wager of the College of Health Professions’ Pioneer Performance Center (PPC) for gait analysis testing.

Merber knew the professors from a visit to the center five years ago and had even met Moran at a running camp. “His talk and demonstration left a lasting impression while still in high school. “His talk and demonstration left a lasting impression on my career,” Merber says. “It was the first time I had ever seen science applied to athletics with such intent. His pointers about the small ways I could improve my running and training were easily reasonable and helpful.”

Optimistic and excited to meet up with his old friend, Merber visited the center in March. Gait analysis assesses muscular strength, flexibility and running motion by capturing and analyzing images of the body running at different paces. Testing takes about two hours. After tracking Merber’s gait, pace, the weight of his footfalls and much more, the experts developed a 25-page report that Moran went over with Merber and his physical therapist. Adjustments were made to the runner’s physical therapy routine to help him train better.

Testing in the lab is also incredibly helpful for students. Kayla Kowalczyk graduated in May with a degree in exercise science and is currently pursuing a master’s in biomechanics at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Working as an intern in the PPC, she says, “helped me put my knowledge to the test and gain an improved understanding of what is taught in the classroom.” Not to mention that putting that classroom knowledge into practice with a world record holder doesn’t hurt for experience.

As for Merber, “There was an issue between the relationship in the firing of my glutes, hamstrings and hip flexors,” he explains. “This resulted in me favoring one side. If I am running 100 miles per week, that’s a lot of steps. If one part of my stride is off, then I am at higher risk for injury. And you can’t run fast if you’re hurt.”

Now Merber, like every champion runner, knows not to look behind but to keep himself focused on the road ahead. “Every opportunity to improve efficiency is a chance to run faster come the next race,” he says. 

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This perpetuates something of a bottleneck when it comes to both research and opportunity in the field. Social work is, of course, practical by definition. But if its study is only practical, if there is too little research into the sociological, psychological, political and economic theories that drive our understanding and practice of social work, then that practice can never properly evolve.

This fall, Sacred Heart begins accepting applications for a Ph.D. in social work that aims to address both of these issues. By offering the course in an almost entirely online format, candidates who have the talent and the will need not be excluded for lack of time or resources.

“We’re taking a chance,” says Jennifer Wilson, clinical assistant professor in SHU’s School of Social Work, noting that at the outset the program might cost more than it makes. To be fair, such is typically the case for any new degree offering; on an administrative level, adding the degree to a university’s portfolio is seen as an investment.

In this case, though, it’s also seen as a moral imperative. With social justice at the heart of the University’s mission, this program begins to address academia’s demographic imbalance head on. Women of color, for example, constitute the highest-growing demographic of students interested in pursuing doctoral education and yet are among the least successful demographics at actually accessing it. “There are many well-qualified master’s-level social workers who would excel in a Ph.D. program,” Wilson says, “but to expect someone who makes an essential financial contribution to their family to drop everything and commit full time to the University is just outdated thinking.”

By going online, the University is able to maintain the academic standards of the degree while offering students the flexibility the current world requires. It also drastically widens the geographic pool from which the best-qualified candidates can apply.

Wilson says she’s optimistic, as much for SHU’s program as for the discipline itself. The opportunity to contribute to a broader understanding of the field by simultaneously diversifying the perspectives brought to bear on it makes this a promising moment indeed.

Wilder Rumpf graduated from Sacred Heart in 2019 with two degrees—and a company. The young entrepreneur is the CEO of FinTron Invest, a new brokerage and investment platform boasting a capital raise of over half a million dollars.

“I was trying to fill a personal need,” he says when asked about his inspiration. The initial goal was simply to free up some time by automating his own trading strategies. In a small office on Sacred Heart’s West Campus, Rumpf started building FinTron. Professors Mark Ritter and the late John Gerlach aided Rumpf with licensing and raising capital for the fledgling project. Later, Professor Michael Gorman joined the
effort, running beta tests for the startup in his FN215 classes.

During the testing and development of FinTron Invest, Rumpf recognized one pitfall present across many other online financial platforms. “They’re having an incredibly hard time leveraging new users,” he says. Traditional financial institutions struggle to market to younger generations, and Rumpf recognized an opportunity for FinTron to solve that problem.

“We took the idea that people were intimidated and overwhelmed,” he says, “and we leveraged technology to create an approach for young people.” This fresh approach led to the development of a simulated trading game within the FinTron platform to encourage confidence in trading among younger generations.

This game, coupled with the additional online banking, investing and philanthropic opportunities (the company promises to donate 5% of net profits to charity and 1% of revenue to a student loan forgiveness program) offered by FinTron, provides everything needed to manage finances safely and effectively. FinTron Invest is set to launch their app this fall with the support of their partners, Apex Clearing and Radius Bank.

It’s a simple answer to a complicated problem. “You can build almost anything; there’s an app for anything you can think of,” Rumpf says. “It’s the logic that you have to create.”

Juliana Fetherman • 19 ➜

JULIANA. FETHERMAN has been an advocate for those with special needs for years. “I loved building awareness on campus and fundraising for the club,” says the 2019 SHU grad. “This was what really sparked my passion.”

Bolstered by her activism, she began work on Making Authentic Friendships (MAF), a web app that offers teenagers and adults with special needs a safe platform to connect with others based on diagnoses, interests and location. “I knew there were people struggling with the same thing,” says Fetherman. “It was mind-boggling that something like MAF wasn’t invented.”

Fetherman partnered her innovative vision with the coaching and capital accessed through iFundWomen to produce a web platform that now sees thousands of visits per day and is used across five continents.

And there is more to come. MAF’s web application is a stepping-stone to a mobile app (due for release this fall) that will give users the opportunity to create unique avatars and earn in-game “coins” by passing quizzes or playing games. In addition to the social networking aspect of MAF, the mobile app will also offer many immersive new activities designed to encourage users to build social skills and learn about internet safety to protect themselves. In this way, the more they practice smart and safe internet and social networking choices, the more coins they earn.

It’s a fantastic way to take the problem of internet safety, arguably one of the greatest challenges facing any social media platform—and one particularly difficult on a platform designed to serve those who may be especially lacking in those skills—and turn it into a feature of the app.

“It’s going to help them use the app more safely and effectively, but it’s also going to help them with their life skills,” says Fetherman. By increasing users’ social awareness, individuals will be able to form lasting friendships and feel confident in their abilities to communicate in their daily lives.
first person, plural

or, “I and the Rest of the Group That Includes Me”

by timothy deenihan
For the rest of you, it goes something like this.
If you are driving a Jeep and you see another Jeep on the road approaching you, first ensure that the left hand is visible on the top of the steering wheel. Ideally, your grip should exude relaxed confidence, without appearing lazy or irresponsible.

The right hand should be out of sight on the gear shift. If you are driving a Jeep with an automatic transmission, your shame is your own; hide that right hand—no one needs to know.

Next, as you near the oncoming Jeep, causally raise the index and middle fingers of your left steering-wheel hand so that, while maintaining sure control of the vehicle, you also throw a super-chill peace sign to the other driver. The timing of this maneuver is critical. Wave too early and you look too eager. Leave it too late and this maneuver is critical. Wave too early and you look too eager. Leave it too late and this maneuver is critical. Wave too early and you look too eager. Leave it too late and this maneuver is critical. Wave too early and you look too eager.

It’s more than that, though. Because if safety feels good and there is safety in numbers, then numbers feel good by association. Thus, belonging is not only rationally sound; it’s emotionally rewarding, too. It feels good to spot another Jeep on the road, and to wave, and to get the wave in return. It feels good to perform the rituals of membership. It doesn’t matter if it’s “Sweet Caroline” at Fenway, “You’ll Never Walk Alone” at Anfield or “Ave Maria” at Midnight Mass; we have a deep-seated need for the reassurance of community with other people.

Because the music was never really the reason you went to the concert, was it? The album always sounds better; it just doesn’t feel the same.

Takeout is plainly not the same as dining in, but it’s emotionally rewarding, too. It feels good to spot another Jeep on the road, and to wave, and to get the wave in return. It feels good to perform the rituals of membership. It doesn’t matter if it’s “Sweet Caroline” at Fenway, “You’ll Never Walk Alone” at Anfield or “Ave Maria” at Midnight Mass; we have a deep-seated need for the reassurance of community with other people.

The absence of those conversations is the greatest of all shared experiences. There is love, with all its joy and pain, in every part of the world. Every parent, regardless of profession, income, skin color or nationality, wants to see their children grow safe and strong. Despite the narratives presented in political advertising, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are not partisan issues.

Even this most bizarre epoch in time itself, where we are divided by politics and isolated by disease, is something we all share—through a footnote important to remember as we watch the news and scroll social media. The past, we might strike up a conversation at a bar with someone over something more than a shared taste in beer or music and, in so doing, be reminded of our shared humanity. The absence of those conversations mustn’t be mistaken for an absence of humanity. Quite the opposite—the absence of those conversations is the very thing we are all going through right now. And when we finally do all come back together, it will be one more thing we all have in common.

In the meantime, if you’re ever out on an errand and you spot a red Jeep coming at you—probably with the doors off and the top down (yes, even now)—feel free to wave.
How do we preserve government of the people, by the people, for the people, when its greatest threat is human nature? **BY ISIL AKBULUTGOK, PH.D.**
The division is most starkly evident along partisan lines. That disagreement exists on topics such as racial equity and gender equality, the role of government and its reach, social issues, immigration, climate change, diplomacy and foreign policy—or that opposing camps would tend toward party preferences—is hardly new. Since the 1990s, however, the partisan divide has widened to a point of blatant discrimination so that, like Montagues and Capulets, it’s now the identity of the other (Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal) rather than their ideology that most inspires vilification. While Americans’ core values and beliefs are surprisingly similar—human life is sacred, spread of diseases must be prevented, livelihoods should be protected and so on—

the focus on the opposition’s label enables either side to willfully dehumanize their political opponents. Hillary Clinton, for example, famously called then-candidate Donald Trump’s supporters a “basket of deplorables.” Less than a year later, Eric Trump dismissed Democrats investigating his father as “not even people.” At best, such demonizing and dehumanizing rhetoric shows a worrying lack of respect. At worst, it can be used to justify aggression and even violence.

There is no question: hyperpolarization in American politics has become troubling. We should not give up hope, however. For a start, while it may seem a low bar to point out that Americans feel they are “only” two-thirds of the way to catastrophic separation, the truth is there remains plenty of room to maneuver a course correction. We know this because there have indeed been times when Americans have been more polarized than they are today, and still the union has survived.

Additionally, it is worth noting that much of what we know about partisanship and polarization draws upon surveys and studies that focus individuals into dichotomous choices that fail to capture the complexity of how respondents actually feel. As such, the very structure of the survey exaggerates our divisions and overestimates political polarization. Even if Americans disagree politically, there is, in fact, more common ground among them than such surveys are able to acknowledge or that politicians and the media, with sound bites, headlines and clickbait, like to portray.

That said, polarization is still real and dangerous. In democracies plagued by polarization (take Brazil, India, Poland, Hungary), the nonpartisan stature of the judiciary and legislative processes is undermined. The legitimacy of electoral processes and political parties is questioned. Demonizing and divisive rhetoric, distrust and political retribution lead to democratic decay. And American democracy is far from immune.

Much like with cancer, the symptoms of polarization begin locally—the distrust, dehumanization and delegitimization discussed above leading either to political gridlock or to winner-takes-all politics, making and unmaking policy with the swing of the electoral pendulum. Yet, however frustrating and exasperating such immediate effects may be, the greater concern is the metastasization that follows as such dysfunction becomes accepted as the norm.

Abroad as at home, the problem begins as a matter of perception. The 2018 Freedom in the World report by Freedom House, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization monitoring freedom worldwide and advocating for democracy and
human rights, notes that the “abolition of the traditional U.S. role as the leading champion of democracy is of deep concern” and has serious long-term implications, particularly in the ongoing struggle against authoritarianism. Many nations believe that America fails to live up to its commitments and recognize the vacuum left by the United States under its current administration. Partisan animus thus not only undermines expectations for the near term. As international agreements become the norm, so that other countries come to understand foreign policies, in some instances pushing them even closer to rival nations like China and Russia. Volatility in American foreign policy can also be exploited by “adversarial nations.” Such nations may attempt to meddle in our politics to help candidates they favor get elected, though it is more likely they would simply seek to perpetuate and amplify our own dysfunctional chaos for their advantage. The return to partisan politics more directly. Fortunately, solutions do exist—if we have the courage and humility to consider them. One possibility is to encourage third parties and proportional representation in America. The United States is one of the few countries that has a two-party system. In a political construct where only two polarized parties represent sizable portions of the population, democratic processes lead to a suboptimal “winner-takes-all” system that fails to address societal problems10 and eventually leads to an ineffective form of government. A growing number of people in winner-takes-all systems, such as America, feel that they cannot influence public policy, that their voice is not heard and that their vote does not make a difference. As a result, they withdraw from politics. This is one of the reasons why America has one of the lowest voter turnout rates among other democracies. Proportional representation and multiparty systems, however, “instill greater efficacy and political participation” and, in turn, increase voter turnout.11 A third party and proportional representation would not necessarily make America less polarized. It can help contain polarization, however, as it will make it harder for the extremes to dominate. Another possible solution is to make voting mandatory in the United States. Compulsory voting, as practiced in many advanced democracies such as Belgium and Australia, boosts electoral participation and voter turnout. Voting is a democratic right. Moreover, it has been shown to hold our leaders to account—not only when they are of the opposition but also, and perhaps especially, when they are of our own. This point cannot be stressed enough. Calling out the Other has been proven to only further enrich our current divisions. It is imperative that we honestly and vocally hold our own selves and parties to the same standards we expect from the opposition. We need to curb the spread of disinformation and hateful posts, memes and speech by reporting them and getting them removed from social media. We need to return to the common goals at the heart of divisive issues and there create effective political coalitions that go beyond narrow partisan politics.

In addition to exacerbating the crisis of democracy itself, hyperpolarization in American politics affects America’s ability to address global challenges and conduct foreign policy. As politicians and parties “become more ideologically distinct,” it is more likely to result in significant policy changes when one party replaces another. Thus the real danger is when “dramatic swings become the norm, so that other countries come to expect that promises and threats are only good for the near term.” As international agreements are broken, allies and adversaries alike learn that American commitments may change with each administration. Partisan animus thus not only reduces the country’s ability to deliver on its promises, but erodes the trust necessary to even make such promises in the first place. At each step, polarization weakens America’s position, both within and without. Allies are understandably compelled to develop independent foreign policies, in some instances pushing them even closer to rival nations like China and Russia. Volatility in American foreign policy can also be exploited by “adversarial nations.” Such nations may attempt to meddle in our politics to help candidates they favor get elected, though it is more likely they would simply seek to perpetuate and amplify our own dysfunctional chaos for their advantage. The return to partisan politics more directly. Fortunately, solutions do exist—if we have the courage and humility to consider them. One possibility is to encourage third parties and proportional representation in America. The United States is one of the few countries that has a two-party system. In a political construct where only two polarized parties represent sizable portions of the population, democratic processes lead to a suboptimal “winner-takes-all” system that fails to address societal problems10 and eventually leads to an ineffective form of government. A growing number of people in winner-takes-all systems, such as America, feel that they cannot influence public policy, that their voice is not heard and that their vote does not make a difference. As a result, they withdraw from politics. This is one of the reasons why America has one of the lowest voter turnout rates among other democracies. Proportional representation and multiparty systems, however, “instill greater efficacy and political participation” and, in turn, increase voter turnout.11 A third party and proportional representation would not necessarily make America less polarized. It can help contain polarization, however, as it will make it harder for the extremes to dominate.12

Another possible solution is to make voting mandatory in the United States. Compulsory voting, as practiced in many advanced democracies such as Belgium and Australia, boosts electoral participation and voter turnout. Making to hold our leaders to account—not only when they are of the opposition but also, and perhaps especially, when they are of our own. This point cannot be stressed enough. Calling out the Other has been proven to only further enrich our current divisions. It is imperative that we honestly and vocally hold our own selves and parties to the same standards we expect from the opposition. We need to curb the spread of disinformation and hateful posts, memes and speech by reporting them and getting them removed from social media. We need to return to the common goals at the heart of divisive issues and there create effective political coalitions that go beyond narrow partisan politics.

Finally, this November we must head to the polls. As Larry Diamond noted on the eve of the 2016 general election, “Democracies fail when people lose faith in them.”13 The simple act of participation, of casting a vote in a free and fair election, may itself be the most important endorsement of the values of democracy. Then, with faith and patience, openness, respect and empathy, we can combat polarization and save the country back together. —

* * *

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The ties which unite the faithful together are stronger than those which separate: Let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is doubtful, and charity in everything.” Gaudium et spes (1965) #92

Near the end of The Wizard of Oz, our hero, Dorothy, clicks the heels of her red shoes and repeatedly says, “There’s no place like home.” On May 24, 2015, on the Solemnity of Pentecost, Pope Francis shared his second encyclical letter, Laudato si’. Although he has forgone the papal tradition of wearing red shoes, God’s crimson love for humanity at Pentecost shone through his letter as he stated, essentially, that without this place, there is no home—and we are responsible for the care of all life.

An encyclical is a “circular letter” meant to be shared throughout a community. Papal encyclicals are often addressed to bishops and priests of a country or region, or to all clergymen, usually clarifying or promoting some aspect of Catholic teaching. Laudato si’, however, is addressed to “every person living on this planet” and encourages an inclusive dialogue about the effects of human activity on the future of life on the earth. Written candidly with both resolve and a hopefulness to work past our existential homesickness, his message is atypically urgent and challenges all peoples to join together swiftly to change the direction of our current policies and practices.

The title of the pope’s letter is taken from the line “Laudato si’, mi Signore” (“Praise be to you, my Lord”), alluding to a religious song and prayer composed by Saint Francis of Assisi.
who praised God for the wondrous aspects of creation and who called our planet ana noita mater Terra—“sister Mother Earth.” The encyclical is divided into six chapters that together examine the connection of human life with God, neighbor and the earth. In 80 pages present a holistic schema of the interconnectedness of all life and the social structures that foster or threaten it, such as law and the common good, politics, urban planning, agricultural economics, clean water, diminishing biodiversity and unrestrained consumerism.

The lived experience of “home” to which Pope Francis alludes is beyond mere notions of abstract space, habitat or nesting. It is a safe and life-giving home—the place of shared life, love, faith, ethics, shelter, refuge, forgivness, meals, laughter, comfort, story, song, and the familiarity of belonging and welcome that is beyond consciousness. It is where the sacred nature of relationships is celebrated and modeled in the Trinity.

DOMINION INTO COMMUNION

Until recently, the topic of environmental sustainability has been discussed primarily from the perspectives of science, politics and economics. Now, with its systematic, spiritual approach, Laudato si’ expands and deepens the conversation and proposes a global solidarity that invites humanity to connect some of the “ties which bind” us to one another.

The pope has the courage to connect these ties to the very fabric of human life and interact between personal and social levels. The encyclical presents a vision of humanity as one that is tied together, united to connect some of the “ties which bind.” As such, ethical apathy and political self-interestedness may well be the great ethical challenge of this century.

Acknowledging that there is no uniform recipe to fix all situations, how to best share our finite resources will require a robust and honest dialogue, critical and creative problem-solving and political will, while balancing economic livelihoods and sovereign homelands. Reconnecting people to their natural environment in a mutually inclusive and respectful way will require a commitment to protecting public and recreational spaces. Technology may be able to provide short-term solutions to connecting people in common pursuits by inviting dialogue into deeper human values, virtues, ethics and spirituality. Finally, in this way of life, caring for Creation and protecting the well-being of all people, especially the poor and vulnerable, to promote universal human flourishing rather than narrow self-interest or political ends may well be the great ethical challenge of this century.

Laudato si’, Pope Francis exemplifies subsidiarity and honors the experiences of people around the world by integrating the insights of conferences of bishops from Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Germany, New Zealand, the Philippines, Portugal, southern Africa and the United States, among other places. Both pastoral and pragmatic, the pope is determined to engage the essential questions of how to promote the common good in a way that embraces the covenant of life that God has offered. Every question is vital, complex, multitudinous and multidimensional—but not impossible when communities make a commitment to work together.

During a ceremony at the Vatican in May 2020, several speakers noted that our commitment to the common good has been tested by the corona virus pandemic that has struck at the beginning of a decade many climate scientists say is critical to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. To many eyes, the virus has been something of a “test run” of humanity’s ability to respond to an existential crisis that affects us all, showing little concern for the vulnerable while particularly taxing the marginalized and those on society’s fringes. The disease has highlighted the importance of individual responsibility, the need to respect the health of others, care for our common home and that all life is interdependent. Clearly, humanity has an unprecedented opportunity to reduce climate change and pollution, thus preventing further degradation that will devastatingly impact those already suffering greatly.

INTERIOR PEACE

Laudato si’ is an invitation to join together to be heroic and generous as individuals and as a human family in relation with all of God’s Creation. Seeking to live an ethic of environmental sustainability is not, and need not become, an idiosyncratic one-issue distraction. Rather, by engaging and transcending the language and insights of science, politics and economics, Pope Francis believes that one can embrace all life issues that reveal the heart of humanity as God’s Creation through “tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings” (LS91). As such, we can be at peace with God, our neighbors, Creation and our best selves by loving more deeply, more holistically, more hopefully, knowing that if we work together we can all be part of the needed solutions to repair the world.

In order to stand confidently at home within our traditions, Catholic universities, such as Sacred Heart University, have a special role in this task of healing the world. Research and action on behalf of the environment and all creatures who live in our common home, serving and advocating for the poor, committing to promote the common good in politics and in our local communities, performing environmentally sustainable practices on our everyday living and humbly seeking God’s will in all that we do are all ways to move through this global challenge together. Admittedly, these efforts will require discernment, planning, political will, resources and widespread commitment. Perhaps a place to begin is a daily Laudato si’, a prayer of St. Francis, “Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures.” Then our actions may follow and help to preserve this beautiful place, our common home, for generations to come. Indeed, there’s no home like this place.

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NOTE Marking the encyclical’s fifth anniversary, Pope Francis formally inaugurated Laudato si’ Week, May 16–24, 2020, beginning a year of activities dedicated to implementing Laudato si’ through Church-sponsored celebrations, reflections and prayers centered on the theme “Everything is connected.”
THIS IS NOT A DRILL

THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS PROVES ITSELF MUCH MORE THAN BASIC TRAINING FOR THE FRONTLINES OF HEALTH CARE.
Public health is the cornerstone of the health sciences as a discipline,” says Vernarelli. Because of its holistic approach to the various elements that contribute to the well-being of the community, Public Health fits naturally into what Bortone calls “SHU’s emphasis on compassionate learning communities.” Iversen adds that “valuing community service, social justice and respect for others, in addition to excellence in health-care delivery, is how the College embodies the values—and why students and faculty alike find themselves at the heart of the community’s response to this current crisis.

Looking forward, the College continues to provide leadership, whether through its incorporation of the changes forced upon us all in this “new norm” or through devising and modeling best practices as the College, the University and the world turn their eyes to the future.

On June 8, under phase 1b of Open CT, Sacred Heart’s College of Health Professions was the first of its kind in the state to reopen its doors. Because, as Iversen says, the health professions “place human touch as a focal point in health-care delivery across all domains,” many educational requirements just cannot be provided online. The new dean and her faculty had to be at the forefront of planning how they would open and operate safely in order to allow students to finish clinical skills labs while still complying with all state requirements.

In collaboration with the Office of Public Safety and senior leadership—I really cannot praise either of them enough,” Iversen says—the College of Health Professions brought 200 students back to campus for the summer to complete their own studies as well as to serve as a “limbus test” of the protocols the University would roll out with the broader opening of campus in the fall. “The dean admits

that a degree of the program’s success may be because of the inherent hypervigilance health science students bring to navigating a pandemic response. Still, if their students are the models of good citizenship and conscientious behavior, it’s just one more example of the College’s propensity for leading from the front.

Likewise, across the College as across the University, and indeed around the world, adjustments have had to be made to accommodate working remotely. While course work is evolving to fit a world of online learning, there are more possible and in-person states where necessary, other programs integral to the College’s larger mission need to restructure their work entirely.

Christina Gunther is director of the global health program and the health science program at Sacred Heart. The global health program has been conducting services trips and educational opportunities in places such as Guatemala, India, Mexico, Vietnam and Uganda (to name a few) since 2010. Participation is life-changing for the students, Gunther says, reaffirming the “dignity of every human life, promoting social justice and equity,” and informing the students’ futures as health-care practitioners.

For now, of course, international travel is on hold, and so the program is being conducted virtually. Using online platforms, students participate in an exchange of ideas on such issues as social justice and human rights with students from Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Virtual lectures and guest speakers are also part of the experience. Again, as with the required practice in clinic, nothing beats “being there.” However, the online program allows more students to participate. As such, Gunther hopes the virtual experience will continue alongside the live program once travel is again permitted.

Iversen and Bortone agree that the technology relied upon during the pandemic will continue to increase in importance and application along after this current crisis has passed. Tele-health, for example, will almost certainly continue to play a key role in health care. Iversen points to this and to the increase in assessments being done through mobile apps. “This approach changes the way you teach students, to communicate and observe movement,” she says, observing, noting and anticipating yet another emerging complexity in the field.

Another trend that is likely to continue is raised awareness of public health. Pendley remarks that people may not always think about public health when things are going well, but that a situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic causes the nation to recognize “what public health is and why it’s needed.” As a result, “There is much more emphasis on social determinants of health,” Pendley says. “It’s connecting with the University’s and the College’s emphasis on social justice and the dignity of every human being.

This desire to make a difference in their communities is what drives many in the health professions. As such, Vernarelli says, “The students in the College of Health Professions see their role as something more than merely receiving knowledge. They’re there to transform themselves. “You come here and you become the change agent for your community,” she says.
BUILDING A COMMUNITY

WHEN A COMMUTER SCHOOL GROWS UP.

Elie Wiesel and Pier Giorgio Frassati Residence Halls on the New Upper Quad
When Jim Kraemer was considering his college options, the schools typically pushed forward by the guidance counselor in his elite, Catholic prep school on Long Island were the ones you’d expect. Jim was looking for something different. He didn’t want to get swallowed up by a large institution or be bound by everyone else’s expectations. He wanted to chart his own course. He wanted a small school where he would be “sort of a big fish in a small pond,” he says.

He got what he was after. The small pond Kraemer found was a school with a campus of just four buildings. The dining hall was still under construction, so he started freshman year eating meals inside a tent. The main building was quite obviously a repurposed 1950s high school and, with no on-campus residence halls, he moved on campus and became a resident assistant, living in a dorm built behind the Jewish Senior Services property.

“The mixture of residential students with commuter students was definitely odd,” Kraemer says. “There were people you saw during the day, and they did go home. But then you also had the people you were living with.” He remembers hosting comedy nights and game shows at Chubby’s Pub, attached to the dining hall. He became the first chairperson of the newly formed Council of Clubs and Organizations, then class treasurer and finally student government president.

“You've got to get involved.” In Kraemer’s day, the student editorium of incoming students that the college experience is what you make of it. “It’s not just about classes,” he said.

At the time, Michael Kinney was on the Board of Trustees. When Kinney himself graduated from SHU in 1972, the all-commuter student body sat at 1,000. Now, in 2020, Kinney is retiring as the vice president of finance and administration of SHU with an incoming freshman class of 1,700 and a campus that is home to 3,100 residents.

BUILDING A RESIDENCE LIFE

When Kraemer settled in as a freshman in ’91, administrators were busy planning on-campus housing and a true residential community. “I literally saw the parking lot become the first on-campus dorm,” Kraemer says. Sophomore year, he moved on campus and became a resident assistant, living in a dorm built behind the Jewish Senior Services property.

“You've got to get involved.” In Kraemer’s day, the student activities director walked the hallways, literally pulling students aside to pitch joining a club or other organization. Today that pitch is a more formal overview of options—everything from 60 student-run clubs and organizations to the 27 intercollegiate club sports—presented as part of an eight-week first-year experience course.

Not long after Kraemer graduated and moved back to Long Island to commute to a banking job in New York, Larry Wielk was interviewing for Sacred Heart’s dean of students role. “I grew up in the Bridgeport area,” Wielk says, “and when I went for my interview my perception was still of a small, somewhat commuter Catholic college.” That reality had passed.

Wielk joined the University soon after its football team had launched. Although the existing basketball team was, as he says, “a Division II powerhouse,” he notes that fall was “kind of sleepy on the weekends, and football energized the campus.” In evolving to a Division I athletics school, SHU was suddenly “on the map outside of the Connecticut area. We expanded our reach for students. And along with that, we kept building residence halls,” Wielk says.

“Having students on campus is extremely important,” Kinney says. “It's what gives you your community.”

Academic growth also helped. The physical therapy program, for example, earned a reputation nationally and aided in attracting more and better students. Professional degree offerings in the health sciences, business and computer sciences also caught the eye of prospects.

EXPANDING OUTWARD

SHU’s reputation may have been growing, but its 56-acre landlocked campus presented a bigger challenge. “We had discussions with everyone who owned a building around here,” Kinney says.

In every direction, the footprint of the campus needed to expand. And at every step, community and purpose had to go hand in hand.

In 2015, the Martire Business & Communications Center opened, and its sunken center hall, dining and lounge spaces bustle on both weekdays and weekends. That same year, Sacred Heart purchased Great River Golf Course in Milford, with facilities engaged for everything from orientation leader appreciation dinners to fundraising events and Parents’ Weekend “Nine and Dines.”

Then in 2016, the nearly 16-acre Jewish Senior Services property became available, paving the way to develop a fully fledged Upper Quad. "Never in our wildest dreams did we really think we’d be able to have that space," Wielk says. "We had to have it.”

Also in 2016, the University made headlines with the purchase of General Electric’s three-building campus. Now called West Campus, the 66-acre property is a breath of innovation, home to the IDEA lab for product prototyping, an artificial intelligence lab, a finance lab, a student incubator space and iHub, a coworking space created through a Verizon partnership.

The following year, 2017, saw the opening of the Center for Healthcare Education, a state-of-the-art facility a little farther down the road at 4000 Park Avenue, blurring the line between classrooms and clinics and immersing students into their professions from the very start of their studies. In addition to cultivating a real sense of community among the health-care disciplines, the building is also home to Balanced Kitchen, another of the school’s dining facilities, purposefully dedicated to healthy and sustainable food options.

EXPANDING INWARD

“In total, in the last 10 years we have committed to spend in excess of approximately $700 million,” says Kinney, noting the added fact that Sacred Heart has managed its own financing. At no point, however, has that growth outpaced its growing sense of community. In Kinney’s 15 years at Sacred Heart, he says the overall goal was this: “to upgrade ourselves, both academically and with student life.”

For example, “Linda’s”—the Linda E. McMahon Commons—features dining and entertainment facilities, a career
center and a new campus store. Its dining facilities, one of seven now across campus with an eighth set to come in 2021 on the Upper Quad, are a long way from what the initial residents had and just one more indication of how vibrant the on-campus community now is.

Another tour stopper is the Bobby Valentine Health & Recreation Center that opened just last year. Beyond the eye-catching climbing wall and the lower level's bowling alley, all corners of the rec center are busy seven days a week. That's especially the case in the evenings and early mornings when its gym gets used for pickup games and intramural sports.

The need for a stand-alone chapel at this Catholic institution was answered early on in the transition, more than a decade ago. Today, alumni weddings there are common. “I’m sure back in the commuter days, there were tons of folks getting married,” Wielk says, “but it’s kind of neat to see the kid from Massachusetts marrying the girl from New Hampshire on campus.”

Campus activity is evident at all times of day and night. Wielk looks to get at least 90% of freshmen involved in a sport or activity. Performing arts programs have close to 900 students involved today, and participation in fraternity and sorority life was more than 1,800 in 2019‒20.

All of it has contributed to a campus community that engenders a sense of collegiality, says Pamela Pillo, executive director of undergraduate admissions and a 2007 graduate of the University. Furthermore, out of that strong sense of community grows a strong sense of responsibility. Volunteerism plays a huge part in the SHU experience, with students giving their time and talents to local schools, senior centers, soup kitchens and other nonprofits, Pillo says. There’s even a whole department focused on community service and volunteering.

Still, there is perhaps no better physical expression of how the University has grown than the Upper Quad. The two residences already open—Frassati (named for the Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, the Italian social activist who died in service of the poor at a young age and remains an inspiration to students worldwide) and Wiesel (after Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Prize-winning Holocaust survivor and activist, in appreciation of the Jewish community that was so long the University’s neighbor on the property)—are nothing short of breathtaking. With vaulted ceilings and high stone arches more reminiscent of Hogwarts than Park Avenue, the dormitories were the first pick of every rising sophomore, as well as a surprisingly high number of juniors and seniors, when the residence lottery opened in the spring. Two more as-yet-unnamed halls are scheduled to receive students in January 2021, and a third, housing the campus’s eighth dining facility, is slated to open the following August. “During move-in [to Frassati and Wiesel],” Wielk recalls, “I can’t tell you how many parents asked me if they could live there.”

The growth of the recruitment reach is evident in Wielk’s own travels. “My wife is from the Jersey Shore, and we go visit family and friends,” he says. In the years just after joining the University, Wielk remembers that people seemed confused and couldn’t place the school. Over time, he started to hear, “You’re the guy who works at Sacred Heart? My nephew is applying there.”

Now? “We go down there and see alums.” And when alumni visit campus, “they’re just in awe,” Pillo says. “We have a picture in one of the offices that has a view of the way it looked when I was a student here. There were no buildings, just a walkway down the hill,” she says. “That is completely different now.”

Even during this year’s coronavirus closures, the campus remained alive with hundreds of construction workers keeping project schedules on track, Kinney says. Now—even after retiring and more than 50 years since first coming to SHU as an undergraduate—Kinney is still on campus in a consulting role. Sacred Heart, it would seem, can be a hard place to leave.

As for Kraemer, he last visited a few years ago for Homecoming. “It was a complete transformation from when I was there,” he recalls. “And when I was there it was great. I walked around and wished I could do it all over again.”

Perhaps that’s because, even with all the changes, the campus experience is in many ways the same as it ever was. “We’ve evolved in size, but we still maintain that personalized experience that attracted so many of us in my days and before,” Pillo says. “That’s where we are grounded.”
ALL HEART

Michelle Loris has made a career out of asking questions and a life out of challenging answers.
“I WAS A BIT OF A REBEL,”

Michelle Loris begins. This is Professor Michelle Loris, licensed clinical psychologist, marriage and family therapist, doctor and professor of both modern American literature and clinical psychology, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, chair of the Department of Catholic Studies, 2013 Connecticut Professor of the Year, 2018 Connecticut Distinguished Woman in Higher Education Academic Leadership Award recipient—and these are just the highlights. The accolades and accomplishments are seemingly endless. “I always did well in school,” she concedes. But then, “I also got a lot of detentions.”

She recounts a time with the Sisters at Notre Dame Catholic High School.

“We wore uniform jumpers and they had to be a certain length to cover our knees. We were measured weekly. One week the length of my jumper did not meet standards, so Sister ripped the hem down.” When teenage Michelle Loris stapled the hem back in place, “Sister said this was—I was—detrimental to the Mystical Body. I replied, ‘How can staples made of metal be detrimental to the Mystical Body, a spiritual entity?’”

The answer somehow involved three Tuesdays after school transcribing the Code of Behavior Handbook.

That Loris has a longstanding penchant for questioning authority may come as something of a surprise to her students. That her definition of teenage rebellion would be to challenge the metaphysical inconsistencies in Catholic school doctrine will be a surprise to exactly no one.

Loris is a local girl. Born into a large Catholic Italian immigrant family in Bridgeport’s North End, the traditional values of love and loyalty to family, practice of the Catholic faith and a fierce work ethic were life’s first lessons. An avid reader by the age of 4, young Michelle would accompany her aunt to the library where she cultivated a fourth passion—learning. It’s no exaggeration to say that these four mainstays—family, faith, work and learning—would become the foundation on which Loris' entire life would be built.

Of them all, her insatiable curiosity for learning is perhaps the trait most easily documented. She became the first in her family to go to college—at a small, local commuter college on the Bridgeport-Fairfield border that had opened its doors only a few years before. Calling up her family’s immigrant work ethic, Loris took every job she could find, working 40-plus-hour weeks while carrying 18-credit semesters to pay her own tuition and graduate in three and a half years. With honors, of course.

“Sacred Heart became my intellectual and spiritual home,” she says. “It formed me.” There she was taught by young, smart, vibrant faculty—“Commonweal Catholics,” she calls them—“who inspired my mind and challenged my heart in and out of the classroom.” She and a group of students would spend Saturday evenings at these faculty homes discussing books, films, civil rights, the Vietnam War. Again a rebel, Loris and these students and faculty attended marches and rallies to protest the war, once even being “collared by the New Haven police,” Loris admits.

Graduating from Sacred Heart, she applied to three different grad schools in three different disciplines because she couldn’t decide what she wanted to study next. She started by earning her master’s in English and immediately joined the faculty at Sacred Heart. A doctorate in American literature from Fordham followed. Curiosity unabated, she obtained a master’s in marriage and family therapy, followed by a Psy.D. in clinical psychology. Now she’s “toying with the idea of maybe, just maybe, doing a master’s degree in theology,” she says. “Not really sure…”

Such is the life and career of Michelle Loris. If true heroes are the ones who run toward danger when others flee for safety, then true teachers are the ones willing to wrestle with the most uncomfortable questions while the rest of us would...
*Immediately rattles off a litany of familiar contradictions between an exclusive magisterium of the Church and the abundance of human presence and ultimate goodness while facing the certainty that evil persists in the world.*

“Why do we hate?” she asks. “The question is something of an intersection of so many of Loris’ professional interests. In literature, her passion has been to grapple alongside the authors and poets to make sense of the human condition and human nature. Clinically, she’s fascinated by human character and behavior and, from her area of expertise, how humans process abnormal levels of psychological pain. As a matter of faith, the Catholic intellectual tradition has long struggled to balance the belief in God’s omnipotence, omnipresence and ultimate goodness while facing the certainty that evil persists in the world.

“Temper is something different,” she continues. “Anger is something different. Why do we hate? And hate so virulently that we harm others with cold cruelty? How did we, as humans, develop hate so virulently that we harm others with cold cruelty? How did we, as humans, develop that capacity?”

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“IT’S A SCARY AND HEARTBREAKING TIME.” + “I KNOW IT MUST BE SCARY WHEN I WALK INTO YOUR ROOM WITH ALL OF MY PPE.” + “SIX MONTHS INTO MY FIRST PA JOB, COVID STARTED.”
“SACRED HEART INSPIRED MY PASSION FOR HELPING OTHERS AND I’M PROUD TO COME FROM A COMMUNITY OF SO MANY GIVING AND SELFLESS ALUMNI.”  •  “THIS IS MY JOB.”
"I WILL CONTINUE TO TREAT MY PATIENTS WITH THE VALUES SHU HAS TAUGHT ME."

NEVER MIND the 5-½" floppy disk drives. Remember wood-paneled walls? Feathered haircuts? How about – yes, back wall, between the first and second computer—ashtrays in classrooms?

My, how the times have changed.

Above, Professor D. Cenk Erdil heads up the Artificial Intelligence Lab in the Welch College of Business & Technology, where the hairstyles have evolved as much as the technology and where, we are relieved to say, smoking is not allowed.
It's one thing to read a magazine. It's another to walk the campus, visit the chapel, take in a game or a show, maybe catch up with a former professor or an old friend. Or just marvel at how we've grown.

Come back to SHU. We'd love to see you.

Plan your visit to campus by contacting Todd Gibbs, executive director of development & alumni engagement, at 203.365.4526 or emailing gibbst@sacredheart.edu.

We are Pioneers.