

Summer 23 Issue 17



Two distinguished alumni returned to our Athens campus in Spring 2023 to share their expertise and insights with students in our MBA and M.S. in Sales Management programs.

On May 24, 2023, we had the privilege of hosting Konstantinos Anastasiou (PMBA '10), a PMBA alumnus and now a Senior Product (UX/UI) Designer at Toptal. Konstantinos's workshop centered on design thinking and digital product design, particularly the art and science of crafting exceptional user experiences.

Gerasimos Gerolymatos (PMBA '09), a seasoned business executive spoke at B-Cube's HOW-TO 3rd workshop on June 8, 2023. His presentation focused on leveraging robotics and AI to launch successful start-up ventures. The event, held at our Athens campus, attracted an attendance of over 60 participants.

Gerasimos's 25-year career encompasses senior positions in marketing, sales, and management. In recent years, he has ventured into the dynamic field of robotics technology, making him a highly sought-after authority in the industry.

The return of these distinguished alumni to our Athens campus not only demonstrated their commitment to our institution but also provided an opportunity for our current students and participants to learn from the best in the business. Their presence served as a testament to the caliber of education our university offers and the achievements of our alumni community.

We look forward to future engagements with our esteemed alumni, as we continue to foster a thriving network of professionals dedicated to making a positive impact on the world.

### **MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

## Two Campuses, One University

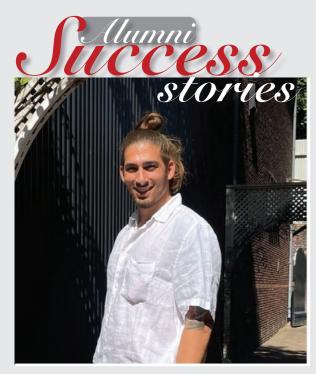
At the end of May, I received notification from the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) that it had accepted the Interim (Fifth-Year) Report that the University had submitted as part of its accreditation requirements. Like all NECHE-accredited colleges and universities, Hellenic American University conducts an extensive self-study halfway through the 10-year accreditation period on its compliance with the Commission's nine standards of accreditation and submits a detailed report of its findings.

In its letter the Commission commended Hellenic American University for "the ways in which [it] has addressed its challenges and significantly strengthened the University over the last five years. "One area of note was the University's success in increasing enrollment at the Nashua campus and the "robust learning experience" this has fostered, and our progress in expanding academic and student support services. We are continuing our efforts in both areas, and I am reasonably confident that we will be welcoming a record number of new students in Nashua this Fall.

Re-reading the Commission's letter and reflecting on our commitment to further integrating the two campuses, I thought I would focus this letter on recent developments at Nashua.

Among the most important steps we have taken to bring the two communities closer together is ensuring frequent and systematic communication between Athens and Nashua faculty and greater interaction between students on both sides of the Atlantic.

Faculty, for example, from both campuses regularly participate in the bodies of university governance. Likewise, all instructors benefit from the same program of new training seminars that the Dean for Digital Learning and Innovation delivers onsite in Athens and in Nashua. Instructors from both campuses took part in the May 22nd workshop on strategic planning for Diversity, Equity,



### Christian Moraitis (BSI '23)

Even as a high school student, Christian Moraitis (BSI '23) knew what he wanted to study and where. "As a kid I was always opening up my toys to see how they worked," he says. "And then in high school, playing video games, I would wind up thinking, how did they put this together? I think that really sparked my interest in IT and especially development."

The "where" was a college or university in the US— Christian's mother is from New Jersey. But that wasn't possible financially. His next steps, he said, was to look at American university programs in Greece. "Hellenic American University seemed to be a good fit for what I wanted to do. And it has been. I fully enjoyed being a student here."

Christian graduated this June. He managed not only to finish his B.S. in Informatics in just under four years, but to do so while working a series of jobs, including a stint as factory worker and a position managing a surfing and watersport center in Rhodes and later as a software engineer for Infralabs Ltd. Towards the end of his studies he was working in the Netherlands as a Full Stack developer for a firm called Pluxbox, where he created software tools for the company's platform.

While a student in the B.S. in Informatics program, Christian won the "Best Paper Award" for the research he conducted for his capstone project and which he presented at the Hellenic American University Student Research Conference on May 13, 2023. The project involved developing a tool that could eventually enable deaf and hard-of-hearing persons to use their native language to communicate online with Englishlanguage speakers who do not know ASL.

In his research, Christian used machine learning and Al-enabled object detection to create a tool that would read hand gestures in real-time, predict the corresponding American Sign Language (ASL) signs, and then compile them into a sentence. The translated caption text could then be converted into speech.

Given the constraints of time and resources, he focused on having the object detection algorithm predict the letters of the American Sign Language (ASL) alphabet. The algorithm was trained on a dataset of over 3,000 photos of signed (gestured) letters that he created himself.

The idea for the project came to Christian during the COVID lockdown and the boom in videoconferencing and virtual meetings collaboration that the containment measures triggered. Christian says that while the digital platforms provided a way to keep collaborating and communicating during the quarantine for many, that was less true for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons.

Even though the project was a prototype that detected and identified letters as they were being signed, the technology, given sufficient resources, could eventually be scaled to identify and predict signs as well. Still, Christian found the project very satisfying. He says that the capstone was an ideal opportunity to pursue an idea that had been on his mind since the lockdown. "I wanted to use it to do something I couldn't otherwise do and at the same time to learn new things and to make something of value."

Christian tells us he has just accepted a new position, again as a Full Stack software engineer, this time at Secura, a multinational cyber security company based in the Netherlands. He will be developing security-related software products to help customers gain insight in their digital security.

The capstone project he did at Hellenic American University, however, left its trace in his plans for the near future. He hopes to pursue graduate studies in machine learning and computer vision.

### ALUMNA IN THE SPOTLIGHT!



Nathasha Sharma (MSPsy '21) is one of the authors of the book titled *Parents, Children, Teens, and Psychological Viewpoints on Parenting Practices in Kuwait and Greece*, published by Rowman and Littlefield. The book explores one of the most vital of stories, childhood and child-rearing practices through stories of families in Greece and the Middle East. These narratives provide insight into parenting not only through the lens of trauma, workplace discrimination, immigration and family separation during war but also through concepts such as resilience,

creativity, and intuition. Nathasha reflects on the challenges and rewards of writing this book, and notes, "It has been a challenging but immensely rewarding as well as emotional journey, and I am so grateful for this experience sharing stories from Greece. I felt intensely connected to the participants and wrote their stories from a place of warm tenderness and admiration".

## SIGNATURE EVENTS



Hellenic American University was honored to welcome Professor Costas Synolakis, President of Athens College, to its Athens campus on January 31, 2023 to deliver the inaugural lecture in the

University's new Distinguished Lecture Series. Dr. Synolakis spoke on "Planetary Health: The Hidden Threat"

The Distinguished Lecture Series brings to the Athens campus leading thinkers, researchers, and public figures from a broad spectrum of disciplines to share their insights and perspectives on their work but also on issues of broader social importance. The series aims to enrich the student learning experience and spark debate within and beyond the university community on timely issues of social and cultural importance. In addition, an important strand in the series will feature young scholars who have made significant contributions to their profession but may not yet have gained the attention of the broader public.



On March 2, 2023, we were glad to have George Stroumboulis, CEO of IDEOLI GROUP, with us for the 2nd Workshop of B-cube's HOW-TO series, entitled "How to Lead: Skills and competences

of leading in different cultures." George focused his talk on the competences and mindset needed to successfully lead and do business in a multicultural context. His talk was followed by a lively Q&A session, where he fielded questions from the audience and from co-presenter Panagiote Tsolis, Director of the University's Business Programs, on how he uses these skills in the group of companies he leads.



On March 22, 2023, author and therapist Dr. Edward Tick delivered a lecture on "Soul Medicine and Trauma Healing: Healing trauma and other wounds to psyche and soma", at our Athens

campus. Dr. Tick talked about soul medicine, the myth of Asklepios, dream pilgrimages and incubation, replication of ancient sanctuary practices, and provided personal guidance for the use of dreams for trauma and holistic healing and transformation. The lecture was organized by the Psychology Department and the Counseling Center of our University.

Following up on last June's masterclass offered by Hollywood producers Sid and Nancy Ganis, Professor Goodman offered a great workshop at our Athens



campus in March. Brenda Goodman is an expert on filmmaking education, especially focusing on documentary filmmaking. The workshop was offered to all faculty, students, and alumni of Hellenic American University with a special interest in the film industry.

On May 24, 2023, Dr.
Eric Smaw, Professor
of Philosophy at Rollins
College offered a unique
workshop for Hellenic
American University's



staff on Diversity, Equality, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB). Members of the administration, instructors as well as staff attended the event willing to absorb Dr. Smaw's valuable perspective on DEIB when it comes to the workplace.

Philippos Nakas
Conservatory and
Hellenic American
College organized
a young musicians'
concert on May 26, 2023,
at Hellenic American
Union's theater (Athens)
to celebrate the seventh



year of their partnership in music education. The gala musical evening featured soloists and various groups such as chamber music ensembles, string orchestra, choir, and modern music ensembles. The musicians, who were current students or alumni of the Philippos Nakas Conservatory and the organizations' joint Bachelor of Music program, performed works from the classical and contemporary repertoires, gospel songs, spirituals, and jazz standards.

Stay tuned for future events and workshops.

Check your mailbox, social media and www.haec.gr and www.hauniv.edu
for more details!

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### Panagiote (Pete) Tsolis

Academic Director of Business Programs Associate Professor



Panagiote (Pete) Tsolis joined
Hellenic American University in
2021 as an instructor in the business
program after two decades of
international corporate experience. Now
an assistant professor, he is reshaping the
University's business programs as
Director of the Business Programs.

His strategic vision draws on the strength of the faculty and their real-world experience; among his immediate priorities has been to expand the program's team of faculty members to include new hires who are stellar practitioners in their fields and translate that experience in the classroom.

As part of his responsibilities as Director of Business Programs, Pete has been working to develop outreach activities for the University's B-Cube initiative.

Launched in November 2021, B-Cube is an initiative developed by Hellenic American University and Envolve Entrepreneurship that offers physical, networking, and mentoring resources for

innovation and entrepreneurship. In addition to providing open co-working space, B-Cube organizes talks by business experts, competitions, and workshops on design thinking, entrepreneurial venturing, and other topics of interest to innovators and promising entrepreneurs. Pete himself co-led one of B-Cube's workshop this March with George Stroumboulis, CEO of IDEOLI Group on how technology and the post-covid new normal have changed the global perspective in the business world and how managers can lead teams of diverse backgrounds in this new environment.

Pete has also made progress on another priority: improving the effectiveness of mentoring for business undergraduates. He's developed a spreadsheet-based model that helps mentors keep track of their students' progress and what courses they still need to complete and when. The application helps ensure that students complete their degree requirements on schedule and frees mentors up to spend more time on other areas of mentoring, such as help on career planning.

Pete comes to the university with an impressive track record in senior management positions in the hospitality, tourism, casino gaming, and tech sectors. While at MGM Resorts International, Pete led efforts to consolidate the

marketing activities of the group's individual properties into a coherent centralized corporate strategy. He also worked for Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, where he handled corporate partnerships and VIP customers as a member of the opening management team that was set up after Deutsche Bank acquired the partially completed property and decided to convert the planned condominium tower into an integrated resort casino valued at \$4 billion.

Pete's corporate experience also includes start-ups. At VizExplorer, he was responsible for providing case studies to the development team and building a business services department, along with the consulting work he did for clients from North Africa, Europe, North America, Latina America, and Asia.

Born in Long Beach California, Pete moved with his family to Las Vegas, Nevada, where he continued his studies, earning a BSBA in Marketing and an Executive MBA from the University of Nevada Las Vegas. He is currently a PhD candidate with Pepperdine University in Global Leadership and Change, with a dissertation on sustainable tourism development in Greece. Not surprising, perhaps, when you consider that traveling is how he likes to spend his free time. Pete has already traveled to most of the states in the US (30 so far) and has spent extended periods of time in Greece and Mexico.





welcomed our Class '23
to our alumni
community, a
community
essentializing the
sense of belonging
we encourage at Hellenic

American University.

After the graduation rehearsal, a wine reception for our Class '23 followed! This special event, intended as a post-graduation rehearsal wine reception, honored our new alumni/ae.

Members of the Executive Committee of the Alumni Association Board were

present during the wine reception and together with the Chair of the Board of Trustees, the President, the Provost, faculty and staff members of the University, we all celebrated with the new grads this momentous occasion!

New graduates had the chance to meet the Board and get to know of its actions, alumni benefits and how they can become an active graduate and contribute to our community!

As we toasted to the Class '23 and their promising futures, we affirmed the enduring bond they now share with Hellenic American University as valued alumni.



Hellenic American University formed a partnership with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America to facilitate educational opportunities in the U.S. and Greece. According to our Executive Vice President & CFO, Dr. Leonidas Tzonis, the scope of this cooperative initiative includes the development of opportunities for study abroad, civic engagement, and faculty and student exchange. Inaugurating the partnership, our Business Programs Director, Pete Tsolis, delivered a workshop for high school and college students in the 46th annual Faith Dance Fellowship Festival, held in Arizona this past February. During the festival, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros announced the offer of ten scholarships to members of the Greek American community for studies in Athens.



### "Titans"

our University's soccer team
made it to the quarterfinals of the #Unileague Cup!
Kudos to all of you, guys!

## Hellenic American University's 13th Commencement Celebrates Class of 2023

Athens, June 29, 2023 - Hellenic American University celebrated its 13th commencement ceremony at the Athens Concert Hall (Dimitris Mitropoulos Hall). The event brought together the graduates and their teachers, friends, and family, as well as esteemed guests, University officers and trustees to honor the 74 graduates of the Class of 2023.

The ceremony opened with valedictory addresses delivered by Angeliki Georgaki (M.A. in Applied Linguistics-TESOL) and Sofia Votsiou (B.S. in Psychology). The Class of 2023 salutatorians, Jeffrey Scott Basile (MBA) and Despoina Simitsoglou (B.S. in Psychology), were also recognized for their outstanding achievements.

Continuing its tradition, Hellenic American University awarded honorary degrees to individuals who have distinguished themselves through achievements in the arts or sciences, education, public service, or philanthropy. This year the University awarded two honorary doctorates: one to Eleftherios Skiadas, a journalist and historian with a long record of public service, including his current tenure as vice mayor and President of the Cultural Foundation of the City of Athens; the other to Dr. Eric Smaw, a philosopher, educator, and civil rights advocate who serves on the national board of the American Civil Liberties Union. Dr. Smaw is Professor and Department Chair of Philosophy at Rollins College, where he also serves as Special Assistant to the Provost for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging.

During his commencement address, President Leonidas Phoebus Koskos pointed out that the new graduates were entering their professional life in a world that is rapidly being changed by the astonishing advances in artificial intelligence and new work environments. He encouraged them to draw upon the critical thinking and innovative mindset their education has equipped them with to meet the challenges in a creative and productive way and called upon them to embrace their role as global citizens and contribute to the development of their communities.

The ceremony was followed by a reception where graduates had the opportunity to celebrate this significant milestone with their professors, loved ones, and friends.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to all graduates of Class '23!



→ Starting off 2023 on a note of guarded optimism continues from page 1

Inclusion and Belonging, which was given by the prominent educator and civil rights advocate Dr. Eric Smaw.

Students from both campuses came together, some virtually, at the Annual Town Meeting in February 2023 to discuss the findings of the recent course evaluation and student satisfaction surveys. We expect, too, the two Student Councils to be working more closely together the new academic year.

Regardless of where you did your studies, you are all alumni of the same university. The success of our Nashua alumni enhances the value of the degrees earned by those who studied in Athens, and viceversa. The University's 13th Commencement in June illustrates this notion of diversity in unity. The valedictorians and salutatorians of the Class of 2023 included a MAAL-TESOL graduate (Angeliki Georgaki) who, like her fellow students in the program, did her degree entirely online; a Nashua MBA graduate (Jeffrey Scott Basile),and two Athensbased alumnae of the University's B.S. in Psychology program (Sofia Votsiou and Despoina Simitsoglou).

Apropos alumni success. I would like to thank all of you who participated in the recent Alumni Employment Survey. We now have reliable information on the employment status of 3 out of every 4 graduates. Of these alumni, 94% are employed or self-employed. We know, too, that 85% of our M.S. in Informatics graduates are working in a field related to their degree or pursuing doctoral studies in the field. A similar percentage of alumni/ ae from the M.A. in Applied Linguistics-TESOL are working in a degree-related field. In addition, a recent review of the M.S. in Sales Management program found that after starting the MSSM program 70% of current students and graduates received a promotion from their firm or switched employers for a better position.

The valuable information you provideus on your employment status enables us to better assess the educational effectiveness of our academic programs. Just as importantly, the more we know about what our graduates are doing professionally, the more we can do to strengthen our alumni network.

I wish you all the best in the coming months.

Leonidas Phoebus Koskos, Esq. President

# News Hows Faculty News Haculty News



Dr. Alexander Nikolaou, adjunct faculty member in the B.A. in English Language and Literature, M.A. in Applied Linguistics, and Ph. D. in Language and Communication programs, codelivered a presentation at the annual conference

of the American Association for Applied Linguistics, which was held in Portland, Oregon March 18-21, 2023. The presentation, titled "Critical Reflections on Qualitative Research Methods in the Study of Affect in Heritage Language Maintenance", was co-presented by Dr. Jennifer Sclafani, a faculty member at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and Ms. Rosiane Barcelos de Oliveira, a doctoral candidate at the same institution. During their talk, Dr. Nikolaou and his colleagues presented insights gained from two ethnographic research studies with heritage language (HL) speakers, one a case study of language socialization in a Brazilian trilingual family, the other interviews with successful adult HL speakers of Modern Greek.

### On March 22-24, 2023, Dr. Ermioni (Monica) Karachaliou,



Director of Student Affairs & International Programs, joined colleagues and experts in the field of study abroad for a three-day meeting of the Conference Committee which is planning the 19th Annual Forum on Education Abroad Conference

in Seattle, U.S..

**Dr. Sofia Kontossi**, adjunct faculty member in the Bachelor of



Music program, musicologist, and pianist, was invited as a guest artist for a masterclass series at George Enescu National University of Arts in Iaşi, Romania, in May, through the Erasmus University program. Alongside pianist Dr. Anna

Siampani (Pacific Piano School, USA), they presented two lecture-recitals featuring Manolis Kalomiris's music for solo piano and voice and piano. They were joined by Assoc. Prof. Dr Oana Severin, soprano and voice professor at the university. The lectures targeted undergraduate and master students in piano, collaborative piano, voice performance, and musicology.

### Petros Romaios, Director of MAT and MACI programs



delivered a presentation on Interpreting and Translation at the Ionian University - Department of Foreign Languages, Translation & Interpreting Career Day on n April 28, 2023. He also translated the exhibition catalog for *Dream On* curated

by Dimitris Paleocrassas, a project commissioned by NEON Organization. For more information regarding the exhibition and the project, visit the link of NEON Organization: https://neon.org.gr/en/exhibition/dream-on/



Our Provost, **Dr. Kaniklidou** and **Stephen Bacigal**, an adjunct faculty member who
serves as the University's Director of
Institutional Research and Assessment, are

coaching the new Hellenic American University Debating
Team. The Hellenic American University Debating Team got
off to a resounding start in late May with an inaugural series
of workshops led by Dr. Eric Smaw, Professor of Philosophy at
Rollins College and the founder and coach of its award-winning
debate team. Under Dr. Smaw's guidance, the Rollins' team has
earned first-place finishes at regional and national competitions.
The University's own team is an initiative of provost Dr.
Themis Kaniklidou, who met Dr. Smaw while she was a visiting
instructor at Rollins. In her words, "Few opportunities match
this one for showing how transformative a learning experience
can be. We hope that the skill of debating will add value to our
students' education and foster their critical thinking and their
self-confidence."

The four-member squad, all of whom were recommended for the team by their teachers, is made up of Or Ayash (BSPsy '26), Jonathan Cacatian (BSI '24), Androniki Fili (BAELL '25), and Andriana Gounalaki (BSPsy '24).



Our business faculty list grew with the addition of **George Ellinidis**, Vice-President and General Counsel, Canada & International, for Smucker Foods of Canada Corp.. Mr. Ellinidis has taught Business Law at Toronto Metropolitan University

since 2004 and more recently at the Lincoln Alexander School of Law, and Osgoode Hall Law School. At Hellenic American University, he taught our Spring 2023 BS in Business Administration course Entrepreneurial Development via Franchising.

## International Conference on Lawrence Durrell: Call for Papers

Hellenic American University is pleased to be co-organizing and hosting the 22nd biennial conference of the International Lawrence Durrell Society (ILDS) On Miracle Ground XXII on July 4 – 6, 2024 at its campus in Athens. The idea of bringing the 2024 conference to the University's Athens campus came from ILDS board member Dr. Athanasios Dimakis, who is also an adjunct faculty member in the University's B.A. in English Language and Literature program.

The conference organizers invite proposals for papers to be presented at the conference.

You can view and download the Call for Papers on the ILDS website here:

https://lawrencedurrell.org/wp\_durrell/?page%20id=1956

### Alumni News



After his first novel entitled "Dark Athens", Arthur Antonopoulos (MSPsy '22) has published his second

book, a collection of short life stories which focus on the lessons learnt from his Master's in Psychology. The volume, titled "Why I Died—Pain. Hope, Rebirth", explores the intricacies of true life experiences and self-growth. The exclusive book launch took place this July at the residence of Dr. Alessandra Sax, formerly Director of the Psychology program at Hellenic American University and was attended by over 100 guests. "Why I Died" is available at select bookstores and online platforms in both Greek and English.



Christina Preka (MAAL '11), who recently completed her studies in the Hellenic Open University -Spanish language and culture

program, has been teaching English, Spanish and French at various levels at private nursery schools and language institutes. Christina has been making a positive impact on students across different proficiency levels, from junior classes to advanced ones. Her passion for teaching goes beyond language instruction, as she also helps students appreciate aspects of all three languages she knows. As she highlights "Each language reflects its own culture which is respectable and should be learnt through the lessons."



Petrina Achyriati (MAT '18) has embarked on a new journey as a professional life coach.
Petrina completed her AC Accredited Coaching

studies and is now a senior professional member of the Hellenic Institute of Coaching. As a life coach, Petrina tries to help individuals unlock their potential and achieve their goals, whether in terms of theirstudies, career, relationships, personal development, diet, or fitness. For more on Petrina's coaching services, visit her website at www.lifecoachpetrina.com.



Panagiotis Koukounas (MAT '18), who has been working as a freelance translator and oral examiner in English examinations, discovered

a passion for linguistics and completed a master's program in English Language, Linguistics, and Translation at the University of Athens, for which he wrote his dissertation on "The role of imagery in metaphor interpretation: a relevance-theoretic approach.". The said dissertation was also presented in an international postgraduate workshop held at the University of Athens. Panagiotis has also contributed to a recent publication on "The Odyssey: an artistic intervention by George Kordis", which has been published by Kapon Editions.



Saman Ahmadi Goli

(MBA '22) has relocated to Tennessee, USA and has been working on the production line at Great

Lakes Cheese for the past year. He will start industrial maintenance studies at TCAT McMinnville in September 2023. Saman hopes to combine the knowledge he will gain from the program with the management knowledge and management skills he acquired during his MBA program.



Since September 2022, Vasiliki Lismani (MAAL-TESOL '21) has been working as a teacher trainer at

Burlington Books, a prominent ELT publication company.
Additionally, she has been serving as an International Baccalaureate Diploma instructor at the Psychiko campus of the Ionios School. Vasiliki has also authored a chapter on pedagogical translanguaging in the publication Pedagogical and Research Perspectives on Language Education. Her chapter was based on her MA thesis in the MAAL program. To wrap up this academic year, Vasiliki had the honor of presenting the ELT Excellence Awards 2023 on June 23.



Dr. Agnes Katsianos (PhDal '18), organized an ambitious end-ofyear teacher development project on

"Using Visual Media for Reflective Learning" for 28 teachers at the Agnes Katsianos School-Teacher Training Center, which she co-founded with her husband Apostolos Katsianos four decades ago. Dr. Katsianos said of the training: "It was a meeting that celebrated the accomplishments and progress of our teachers and their students, leaving me feeling motivated and excited to continue exploring ways I can help the new generations learn and grow into lovers of learning."

### **Share Your Good News!**

Have you found a new job or been given a promotion? Gotten an article published or run a marathon? Moved to a new town or city? We invite you to share your news and accomplishments with the rest of the alumni community. Just email us at alumninews@hauniv.edu a short note about what you've been up to recently. We'd be happy to share your news in a coming issue of the Alumni Newsletter.

### The Alumni Association Board

Georgios Panou (BSIT '16)

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