Dear Members of AUP’s Worldwide Family,

I am writing to you from confinement in my home in Paris, all too aware, as I’m sure you are too, of the abrupt upheavals in all of our lives caused by this devastating pandemic. Having been elected to the role of Chair of AUP’s Board of Trustees in May, taking over from Raymond F. Henze III, I wish to convey the Board’s most sincere gratitude to Ray for his steadfast guidance over these past six years toward an AUP that is increasingly financially stable and recognized by ever-broader communities, including our own, for its outstanding student-centered culture. We continue, in developing the next stage of our strategic plan, to build on these pillars, creating opportunities that will enhance our financial strength, even in these most dire of circumstances, while presenting our students with exceptional learning pathways that respond to exceptional times.

This issue of the AUP Magazine seeks to share with you some of the AUP community’s proudest moments over these last ten months – moments of courage, perseverance and solidarity. We have learned and witnessed so much from each other: acceptance of our role in communal responsibility, whether in response to Covid-19 or the Black Lives Matter movement; resilience; adaptation; care and support for family, friends and community; and our need to remain healthful and helpful. The issue’s feature story celebrates our community’s extraordinary accomplishments.
in the dynamic circumstances of an evolving government response to a unique and unfamiliar crisis. Throughout the magazine, you will discover how AUP community members have managed critical points of action with agility, innovation, integrity, sensitivity and a shared commitment to address a fast-changing environment. Whether reading of Professor Susan Perry’s class publication initiative, student-led projects such as AUP Student Media’s Corona Diaries video series, or the founding of the Black and Abroad student club by AUP senior A’mari Bing-Way, you will find evidence of AUP students overcoming uncertainty by challenging their analysis, reasoning and judgment in the face of unforeseen and complex changes. Their solutions are creative and adaptive, based on AUP’s approach of versatile interdisciplinary pathways to interpreting problems and navigating to successful outcomes.

Covid-19 has been a global phenomenon, impacting every family’s every decision – and AUP’s family is no exception. The Board of Trustees and the Leadership Team have appreciated your solidarity with us in the decisions we have had to make and have yet to make. Support from our community is critical to us. Our community is strongest together and, on behalf of AUP’s Board of Trustees, I thank you and count on you to accompany us as we continue to build AUP’s future. I hope, as you read this issue, that you will feel as proud of AUP as I do.

Doris Daughney
Chair of the Board of Trustees
LE RACISME NOUS ÉTOUFFE

NOUS SOMMES TOUS DES GEORGE FLOYD
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STUDENTS CAPTURE CONFINEMENT LIFE

Isolation is by definition a solitary experience, but one that, in 2020, was shared by staff, students and faculty across The American University of Paris. But social distancing doesn’t mean an end to collaboration; all across the AUP community, new projects have harnessed the community’s creativity. For AUP Student Media, creative solutions have meant not only maintaining the organization’s learning goals, but also providing a support network of peers sharing stories about how they have been coping with isolation. The result is the Corona Diaries, a series of video blogs and written content documenting life in lockdown. Shining the spotlight on an unprecedented shared situation became an exercise in solidarity, uniting quarantining students across the planet in an expression of their common experience.

The Corona Diaries is a collaboration between ASM’s online and video platforms. Often funny, sometimes melancholic, the eight video episodes and multiple articles cover a full range of emotions associated with lockdown life. “We were almost playing the role of a writer or filmmaker, whose exploration of the personal space becomes something very universal and relatable,” says Professor Jurgen Hecker, ASM faculty advisor for the 2019-20 academic year. Each week, students were asked to relate their work to a different broad theme. One episode was dedicated to the students’ views on the proliferation of fake news and conspiracy theories associated with Covid-19, while another explored how it felt to travel home during lockdown. The “Headspace” episode tackled the vital topic of mental health; it used simple visuals – headshots of the speakers staring resolutely at the camera – coupled with emotive voiceovers to explore what participants learned about themselves during quarantine.

These video segments, in addition to providing a glimpse of the lives of students in confinement, were linked to participants’ academic requirements.
But, as Professor Hecker soon discovered, some subjects are more challenging to teach remotely than others. “I think a video journalism class being confined probably takes the biscuit,” he says. Journalists report on the world around them, and when that world is inaccessible, it makes it impossible to film interview subjects. Given that the move to remote learning came midway through the semester, students had thankfully already covered many of the technical aspects of filmmaking in class, including lighting, framing, editing footage and recording audio. These formed the basis of a revised assessment strategy, grading students’ Corona Diaries contributions in lieu of more traditional journalistic output. Students were encouraged to bear witness to a situation that was personal and sometimes even intimate – something that, for many, was a new experience. “In a way, we were taking away layers of protection in daily life and allowing other people into our personal sphere,” says Hecker, who himself produced a vlog.

This tonal shift away from reporting and toward personal narratives also had implications for ASM’s editorial process. “We definitely had to relinquish control a bit,” says Anita Maksymchuk ’20, who was Executive Producer of the Peacock Play YouTube platform during the 2020 Spring semester. Confinned in Paris, she found that the project helped her establish a routine and gave her a creative outlet. This creativity was freely encouraged, and students were able to go beyond the scope of the week’s theme by choosing to discuss whatever they felt was most relevant to their personal experiences. This flexibility in turn informed the next week’s editorial discussions. “It let us see what students were interested in,” says Maksymchuk. “And at the same time, it was unique because students all had different styles, as they weren’t as constricted by the journalistic format.”

The Corona Diaries
From the beginning, the project aimed to show that, despite Covid-19, the AUP community was still up and active. “We wanted to say that we may not be on campus, but we’re still a part of student life,” says Maksymchuk. “I think one thing that everybody learned is that this online format is not an excuse not to collaborate.” The content’s popularity among the AUP community was a welcome surprise. By sharing their anxieties, joys and everyday experiences, students were able to reassure one another that, though physically distanced, the community was as close as ever; the Corona Diaries became a focal point for community feeling. “It was, in a way, quite ironic that this is a journalism class and our most successful product was a personal vlog,” says Hecker.

The Corona Diaries continued into the Fall semester, as students grappled with the ongoing pandemic and became familiar with AUP’s new, temporary hybrid learning approach. But not only did the project help the community through a difficult time, it also provided a time capsule of a difficult moment in history – one that caused a lot of reflection and emotion. Students openly and honestly discussed the difficulties of lockdown living, which also allowed them to focus on the potential opportunities for learning and growing. “You want to see that you’re not alone in having these issues,” says Maksymchuk. “It’s a nice relief, and it paves the way for a different type of filmmaking, one with more inclusion.” Even if it’s not always possible to be on AUP’s campus, it’s still possible to be part of its community – the Corona Diaries are great evidence of that.
For academics, the changes brought by the Covid-19 pandemic extended beyond the Spring semester and into conference season. AUP’s first-ever online conference offered a new way to engage with colleagues’ research.

The professional lives of AUP’s faculty have faced a two-pronged assault from the Covid-19 pandemic: not only have professors had to navigate the seismic shift to remote teaching practices, they have also faced unprecedented disruption to their research and networking plans. Travel bans and social-distancing measures have led to canceled conferences all over the world, as academics have seen time they would usually spend presenting research become periods of forced isolation. Ever resourceful, AUP’s faculty have nonetheless found a way to re-group and turn the challenges of the present moment into exciting opportunities. One of the results has been the University’s first-ever online conference: The Psychology of Global Crises.

“The initial idea was a relatively primitive reaction to the situation we were in,” explains Martin Dege, a former AUP professor who co-organized the event back in May 2020. Finding himself in confinement in Cairo, Dege concluded that, despite public health restrictions, colleagues would be eager to gather virtually to discuss their research. The chosen topic would also help academics make sense of a complex and still-evolving historical moment. Dege reached out to colleagues across the world, forming a group of 14 co-organizers, which included fellow AUP professor Maria Medved.

Organizers were keen to allow speakers the flexibility to discuss a wide range of crises, though Covid-19 understandably dominated the discourse. “It was a topic that was just so needed at the time,” says Medved. “The pandemic has amplified problems and inequities, bringing to the fore all these things we try to sweep under the carpet.” The scope of the topic was such that the call for submissions elicited an interdisciplinary response, with sociologists, anthropologists and ethnographers attending alongside psychologists.

An online conference also allowed for greater technical flexibility than an in-person event. “The idea was to organize something that people could still recognize, while adding benefits that you wouldn’t get from a major in-person conference,” explains Dege. Given that there was no need for a venue, organizers extended the conference to ten days to maximize participation. Talks ran over a 16-hour period, which not only accommodated speakers in multiple time zones, but also allowed organizers to avoid simultaneous talks; an attendee could, in theory, participate in every discussion and panel. “We were in Paris, but simultaneously everywhere on Earth,” says Dege.
A driving principle of the conference was to keep things simple - particularly from a technological standpoint. "The online semester did most of the work for us," notes Dege; many faculty members were already familiar with the required software. Talks took the form of webinars, allowing participants to ask questions through a chat function, and keynotes were live-streamed to YouTube, where the entire conference is now available to watch online. Dege hopes that future events will make use of similar digital tools to augment the in-person experience: "The next level for me is to enter into this hybrid space - not a return to, but an expansion of, the face-to-face meeting into the digital world." He cites online Q&As and live-streamed panels as key to this new format.

One of the benefits of such a model would be increased interaction between scholars and the public. Medved notes that, for students in particular, it can be intimidating to approach guest speakers face-to-face. The virtual format brought out voices that would have remained silent at an in-person lecture. "There was such an openness," she explains. "I felt, for a time, that the hierarchy was destabilized. That was unique." This destabilization was further emphasized by the focus on a crisis still very much in flux, which led to a strong sense of solidarity among participants - a sense of bonding and support that felt unusually strong for an academic conference. "A big outcome was just helping people feel more connected globally," says Medved.

A more communal approach to knowledge production is an ongoing aim of the conference organizers. As well as taking the traditional publication route - the conference has inspired four books and an article in the journal Human Arenas - Dege and Medved are working on a public-facing podcast and regular email bulletin, both designed to continue the conversation about psychology and Covid-19. These will be hosted on a new website, crisistalk.net. A global crisis, it seems, requires a global response - not only geographically, but also from across established hierarchies. "As much as possible, moving forward, we need all those layers of society to come together," concludes Medved. No matter how the Covid-19 pandemic evolves, keeping the academic community connected to the wider world will remain an important priority.
Since Patrisse Cullors and Alicia Garza created the Black Lives Matter movement on social media in 2013 to bring attention to the alarming number of racially motivated hate crimes committed against Black people in the United States, the movement has continued to gain momentum, bringing awareness and activism to issues of police brutality, systemic racism and violence against Black people. When Breonna Taylor and George Floyd were murdered by police officers earlier this year, support for the movement was reignited, and citizens across the globe – including AUP community members – protested unjust and systemic acts of police brutality against Black individuals and other people of color.

At AUP, an important conversation began. Current and former students voiced their disappointment at the administration’s perceived delay in responding to resurging protests. The administration was quick to acknowledge community members’ concerns; in the past six months, the AUP community has made great strides in collaborating toward a more inclusive, actively antiracist community. On June 4, President Celeste M. Schenck and Provost William Fisher sent an open letter to the community outlining how AUP, both as an institution and a community, could take a leading role in helping bring about lasting change. The proposed actions were greatly influenced by community members, who demanded the administration take an official stance against systemic racism in order to create a more diverse, inclusive and empathetic community.

Following this email, staff and faculty began discussing their role as educators and community members in uplifting marginalized voices and advocating for antiracism. Three all-staff meetings were organized by Professor Tanya Elder throughout June, focusing on Black Lives Matter and the role of diversity at AUP. These discussions led to the creation of eight working groups, each taking on a different topic: antiracism training, curriculum reform, hiring practices, opportunities for activism, scholarships, support services for students, communication with the community, and feedback loops. These groups have collaborated with international organizations such as Amnesty International and SOS Racisme to offer more opportunities for students to become involved in antiracist activism at AUP, in Paris, and beyond.

Student organizations also mobilized to express support for Black Lives Matter and emphasize the need for a safe, welcoming environment for Black community members at AUP. On June 8, the History, Law and Society executive board – in conjunction with the Diversity Club and Black and Abroad –
organized a community-wide online town hall to discuss how AUP could become a more inclusive and responsive place while striving to create lasting and effective change. The voices of Black students, staff and faculty, as well as other community members of color, were prioritized at the event, with non-Black community members asked to take the opportunity to listen, acknowledge and learn. “Something that I reflected on for a long time was the amount of people who came - the volume of students’ voices and the staff and faculty members’ willingness to listen,” says Krystel Nozier, a HLS board member who helped organize the town hall. “At one point there were 178 people on the call. It’s amazing how a remote meeting became a space for dialogue.”

In addition, the Leadership Team moved to establish a Diversity Council. Made up of two students, two staff and two faculty members - all of whom volunteered and were elected for the position - the council has met weekly since the summer with the goal of creating an immediate institutional organization to fight for equality and inclusivity for all AUP community members. Currently, the Diversity Council is examining existing grievance policies to make sure they reflect current community values regarding inclusion and ensure a safe environment for all community members. Members of the Diversity Council will receive training in how to advocate effectively for those reporting grievances, which will then be offered to all community members to encourage greater sensitivity and awareness of inclusivity on campus. The council, acting as an advocate and advisor, will also collaborate with faculty and staff to ensure that policies for reporting discrimination protect those who raise concerns; to examine recruitment, scholarship and hiring policies; and to broaden the scope of topics in AUP’s curriculum.

Together, AUP community members are working to shift their understanding of the individual and collective roles that everyone has when advocating for antiracism, while also acknowledging that the institutional changes that have already been implemented have had a huge impact on our community. Through the work of the Diversity Council, staff and faculty working groups and student organizations, positive change will continue to occur - not only via increased awareness of issues surrounding racial justice, but also due to the University’s dedication to equality, representation and antiracism.
The year 2020 was unconventional for many reasons. Though the professional lives of AUP faculty members went through immense changes, one thing stayed consistent: academics published the hard-earned results of their research. Here, we highlight three publications from across the University, works that tackle questions of international criminal justice, the exploitation of truth, and Renaissance plague literature. Each work highlights the commitment of AUP’s faculty to asking questions of international importance in a way that resonates with a global liberal arts worldview and contributes to interdisciplinary academic discourse.

AUP faculty members Sharon Weill and Kerstin Carlson, both of the Department of History and Politics, along with Kim Thuy Seelinger from Washington University in St. Louis, contributed as editors to *The President on Trial: Prosecuting Hissène Habré*, published by Oxford University Press. The preface is written by Denis Mukwege, co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018. Part one of the book presents the trial and its impact using a novel structure of first-person accounts from 26 direct actors, including politicians, judges, lawyers, victims, donors, clerks and others. The second section then presents academic analyses from leading experts on international criminal justice. The publication provides unique insight into the construction and process of the Extraordinary African Chambers in Senegal, while also proposing an innovative method for conducting research on law courts. It will be a helpful resource for anyone teaching empirical legal studies, comparative law, or international law and institutions.

Matthew Fraser is an associate professor in the Department of Communication, Media and Culture. His book, *In Truth: A History of Lies from Ancient Rome to Modern America*, was published by Prometheus Books last spring. The work offers a sweeping examination of the philosophical, religious and cultural underpinnings of beliefs and attitudes regarding what is true and false. Fraser’s analysis begins in Ancient Rome by considering how myths, legends and superstitions framed perceptions of truth and how they were used...
as political tools of propaganda. The book traces the same questions through early Christianity, the medieval era, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the modern era of ideologies and propaganda, arriving at our own “post-truth” age and the election of Donald Trump in 2016. The book concludes that the postmodern disavowal of truth, and its cultural validation of subjective beliefs over objective facts, facilitated Trump’s emergence and political triumph. Intended for a broad audience, the work is accessible and engaging and will interest a wide range of students and scholars in the fields of history, philosophy, politics and communications.

Finally, amid the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, we delve into historical representations of plague in literature. Brenton Hobart is an associate professor in AUP’s Department of Comparative Literature and English. His French-language work, La Peste à la Renaissance, L’imaginaire d’un fléau dans la littérature au XVIe siècle, covers literary representations of plague by Renaissance authors, who, he argues, perpetuated a narrative of plague initially developed by major works from antiquity and the Middle Ages. Hobart explores how imitation and reinvention by Renaissance authors, styling themselves as plague survivors, created a codified literary genre of French-language plague writings. Tracing recognizable images through the works of multiple writers – including François Rabelais, Nostradamus and Michel de Montaigne – Hobart highlights how representations of the plague, and representations of individual and collective acts in times of plague, entered the Renaissance imagination. The book is published by French publishing house Classiques Garnier.

The publications highlighted here are just three examples of the range of engaging liberal arts scholarship conducted by AUP faculty members. At a time of great change in academia, the permanence of written scholarship provides a welcome reminder that the ongoing collaboration that is knowledge production is a constant, vital task.
ON CAMPUS

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The "Fearless Girl" facing the NY Stock Exchange
Professor Peter Hägel is an expert in international relations and the political economy of globalization. When the pandemic hit, he was well placed to teach the current moment – and students responded with enthusiasm.

Like many academics in the 2020 Spring semester, Professor Peter Hägel was faced with the enormous task of moving entire programs online in the space of a few days. In the case of his Global Political Economy class, the transition was not only smooth, but also promoted a new level of engagement and interpersonal collaboration among students. Swapping classrooms for conference calls didn’t stop eager global explorers from developing new skills and expanding their knowledge – often by directly engaging with the crisis unfolding around them.

Global Political Economy tackles broad questions of how political and economic processes influence each other in an international context. “The class is very much taught from a perspective of: What are the political consequences of globalization? And how do politics and economics interact to promote, resist or otherwise respond to globalization?” explains Hägel. While grounded mainly in political theory, the course exposes students to what Hägel calls “the economic mode of thinking,” encompassing macroeconomic concepts such as exchange rates, investment and growth. These concepts are often unfamiliar to students taking the class, who, for the most part, are majoring in international and comparative politics. “I always respond to those fears by saying that it remains a politics class,” says Hägel, emphasizing that a broad knowledge base allows for a more nuanced approach to the topics at hand.

Throughout, theory is applied to real-world examples to ground students’ studies in career-relevant contexts. Students take an in-depth look at global value chains and engage with the political and economic consequences of familiar products. “Students know their iPhones are made in China,” says Hägel. “They can relate to that. It can be quite intuitive, even if they learn more about the empirical details.” Other topics may be less well known to students; Hägel particularly highlights the section of the course that covers the legal frameworks governing foreign direct investment. Whereas supranational bodies such as the World Trade Organization govern many aspects of global economic activity, investment is not managed in this way. “It’s a relatively messy system, and something students tend not to know much about,” he says.

When Covid-19 arrived, Hägel adapted in-class conversations to the present moment – the
pandemic itself becoming an important case study, particularly with regard to production chains – for example, the distribution of masks. “Students were clearly asking questions about how the world would be affected by what we’re going through right now,” he explains. Hägel expects students to read assigned material in advance of introducing a topic in class – a format that allows greater focus on in-class discussion and applying theory to international affairs in practice. He notes that engagement in these discussions was boosted by the shift to remote learning; lockdown freed up more of students’ time for grappling with the readings and analyzing assigned material.

Hägel found adapting to a transnational classroom – with students connecting from multiple time zones – to be an academically fulfilling experience. “It was learning by doing, and the students learned faster than me!” he explains. “I think, for me, what was most surprising was how both attendance and student participation were very high from the beginning. I really have to praise students there.” Key to this sense of solidarity was the fact that students had been encouraged to form a supportive learning community during the in-person portion of the semester, which contributed to a strong sense of camaraderie in online discussions. The digital format also allowed less-outgoing students to contribute through the chat function, which brought additional voices and perspectives to the table.

The transition to remote learning, though smooth, still revealed valuable lessons that Hägel hopes to implement in future classes. As part of the move online, Hägel adjusted the course’s assessment methods, replacing pop quizzes with written responses to questions analyzing the global impact of the virus. The responses demonstrated a strong commitment among AUP students to take a global perspective, to understand globalization and its consequences, to combine analysis with ethical and moral reflection, to care for human development and to be sensitive to cultural differences,” he says. He continued this approach during AUP’s hybrid Fall semester, assigning online writing tasks in addition to in-person quizzes. While adapting to new hybrid teaching methods is a complex and ongoing task, the eagerness of global explorers to engage with the world’s most pressing issues has been key to making the transition more manageable.
Professor Peter Hägel’s academic interests revolve around transnational politics and global political economy: the interactions between politics and economics at a global level. He looks at how traditional nation-state models are being brought into question by international processes such as European integration and globalization. Hägel holds a BA/MA from Freie Universität Berlin, during which he spent a year at Columbia University, New York. His PhD, conducted at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, will receive final validation following the publication of his upcoming book: Billionaires in World Politics (Oxford University Press, 2020).

The book looks at what super-rich individuals can accomplish in international affairs in arenas usually reserved for collective actors - an umbrella term encompassing states, corporations, social movements and NGOs. The work explores what happens when individuals in control of vast wealth decide to influence world politics; rather than being billionaire politicians, his research subjects are immensely influential while remaining unelected. This research provides the backdrop to his teaching at AUP, where he is program director for the philosophy, politics and economics (PPE) major. As well as Global Political Economy, Hägel teaches Foundations of Modern Politics, which provides a broad overview of the study of international and comparative politics.
The Covid-19 pandemic upended classes and curricula all across The American University of Paris, leading to the unavoidable cancellation or modification of events, projects and assessments. Faculty members had to think quickly to come up with new, exciting collaborations - in many cases encouraging students to engage directly with the global health crisis unfolding around them. When Professor Susan Perry’s annual Ecole de Guerre practicum was called off on short notice, she put together a proposal for a collaborative publication that would bring students together to consider how humanitarian organizations were responding to the evolving pandemic.

The Ecole de Guerre practicum is a multiday simulation of a pan-European military crisis, in which students take on the roles of international humanitarian organizations responding to events as they unfold. The practicum is immensely popular with students, and former participants often return to assist with subsequent sessions. Perry notes that managing student disappointment after the cancellation was a challenging task. “The question was: how can we replace a very meaningful experience that also had career implications?” The publication emerged as a way to allow students to continue the role-play aspects of the original course. Participants had the option of either writing an academic

After the cancellation of AUP’s annual Ecole de Guerre practicum with the French war college, Professor Susan Perry instead developed a collaborative academic student publication exploring humanitarian responses to the global pandemic.
Students attending the Ecole de Guerre practicum in 2016

Professor Susan Perry (center right) and students speak to staff at the French war college.
research paper about humanitarian responses to the pandemic or drafting a series of blog posts in the style of humanitarian organizations working to alleviate the impacts of Covid-19.

To facilitate collaboration, the class made full use of online videoconferencing software to break off into discussion groups; Perry could circulate between the different online chats during class time to offer assistance and feedback as drafting took place. “I’ve learned how to use the technology in a much more meaningful and effective way,” she explains. “I now understand how one person explaining to a small group can use these platforms to create a sense of collegiality and intimacy.” The online format of the editing sessions also made it easier for former students to call in and connect with students. Cody Mannick ’21 had signed up to be a battle captain at the canceled practicum; battle captains are former participants drafted to help students understand their roles as humanitarian organizations. “I was excited to help out the students in class, especially since they were missing out on the experience itself,” she explains. “And working with Professor Perry is always a joy.”

Former participants like Mannick not only provided students with their experience of the
humanitarian framework taught through the canceled practicum, they also helped add to the sense of collegiality created during the class. Perry believes this was one of the main reasons participation rates were high, despite the book project remaining optional. “It took on a life of its own,” says Perry. “Students on lockdown were eager to work together on a common project that was intellectually challenging and addressed Covid-19 head on.” Working in small groups that took a chapter each, students edited selected blog posts and abstracts into a 60-page publication, forming a coherent overview of humanitarian responses to the crisis unfolding around them. The topics covered included the importance of tailoring responses to the needs of specific vulnerable communities and the interplay between technology and personal freedoms in test-and-trace efforts.

The project’s collaborative elements allowed participants not only to continue their education, but also to mitigate some of the difficulties of confinement. “This project reflects the resilience of AUP students, facing a challenging new landscape presented by the pandemic,” says Bileh Dougsiyeh G’20, an MA student and contributor to the book. “I could not be more thrilled with the outcome, thanks to Professor Perry’s guidance and the hard work of all 25 students in the course.” He notes that the skills he and his fellow students developed, specifically by learning to be reactive and adaptable, are increasingly important for those interested in the evolving field of humanitarian response.

Alongside broadening their skill sets, a large draw of the project for students was the opportunity to give their name to a peer-reviewed publication. The idea was to mirror the academic peer-review process as closely as possible; Perry acted as editor-in-chief and initial reviewer, and a colleague provided comments on the finished draft. The finished product was uploaded to an online publication platform – meaning students could share their work with potential employers. “It’s really nice to be able to point someone to something you have written,” explains Nicole Santiago G’19, another former Ecole de Guerre participant who returned to support the students. Santiago, who now works for a legal firm consulting on issues of ethics and technology during the pandemic, was impressed with the speed with which students adapted to a real-life crisis in place of a simulation: “In some ways it reflected the stress of a crisis management environment even more.”

In this way, students were able to relate the knowledge they gained in class to a still-evolving historical moment. “Students began to realize the tremendous support that civil society provides to all citizens in an emergency,” says Perry. “I don’t think they knew the extent to which these organizations are fully operational within a very short space of time – and can save lives.” Engaging with the crisis helped widen students’ perspectives beyond their own situations, in isolation across the world; it framed the global struggle against the pandemic as a collaborative effort, providing what Perry calls a “multipaned window” onto Covid-19. “It showed that this is a complex situation and that civil society has done an excellent job responding to it.” The students’ own achievements, made evident throughout the finished publication, mirror this excellent response.
The year 2020 has meant for many a slow-down in the daily grind, but Aimari Bing-Way has been busy. This AUP senior is founder and president of the Black and Abroad club, which provides a space for Black students to meet and talk about issues that are important to them. Established in 2019, the club organizes regular discussion groups covering topics relating to the Black experience at AUP and worldwide. It aims to educate, represent and advocate for Black students - a task that remained vitally important during a Spring semester marked by both the Covid-19 pandemic and the global prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Bing-Way founded the club because, arriving in Paris, she didn’t find a dedicated organization for Black students at AUP. “When I arrive somewhere new, it always takes me a minute to find myself and make myself comfortable,” she explains. At the time, Inspire Africa - a now-defunct club that worked to expose the student body to African cultures - was the closest to a Black students’ organization on campus. Bing-Way felt that Black students needed a dedicated space. “I was like, leave us a place to be Black!” she says. “For me it was a no-brainer.” She had already set up a diversity club at her former high school and was eager to bring that experience to ensure the new club’s longevity. “I would see other AUP clubs pertaining to minority groups last so long,” she says. “Everything I do with this club is meant to last beyond my graduation.”

Black and Abroad meets weekly and tackles a different topic each session. These discussions are only open to Black students - though certain events, such as the club’s Paint and Sip art socials - are promoted to the wider student
Creating an exclusive space was vital to Bing-Way’s approach to prioritizing the needs of Black students - something reflected in the club name chosen. “There are two requirements to be in the club: be Black and be abroad,” explains Bing-Way. “It’s literally what we are in Paris.” There’s also a deeper meaning – an acknowledgment of the additional challenges Black community members face in prominently white environments. “Black people are abroad in America too,” she says. “When I moved from the DC area to Massachusetts, I had culture shock in my own country.”

The club’s conversation topics have included gender dynamics among Black students and the personal and political significance of hair - the latter discussion was accompanied by a screening of the 2019 animated short film *Hair Love*. Another highlight for Bing-Way has been the club’s session on cultural miscommunication between Africans and African Americans. “People often assume that, because you’re both Black, you know each other,” says Bing-Way. “But there are cultural backgrounds that can put a big barrier on communication.” She believes that it’s important for participants to “get comfortable with being uncomfortable,” and is keen to create a supportive atmosphere, without shame or judgment, that helps people work past their assumptions. Every attendee is expected to contribute - there’s no staying silent or blending into the background.

When the pandemic hit, Black and Abroad moved its discussions online. Despite some initial challenges, the meet-ups translated well to an online format. “At an in-person event, there’s an emotional and visual part of it as well, but you really have to choose your words wisely online,” says Bing-Way. She found, however, that the ease of hosting online events allowed her to expand the club’s audience, and she was able to include Black alumni in meetings for the first time. “It honestly opened up so many things,” she says. “It saved time, travel, money - and also energy. You’re able to put in more effort.”

That extra energy proved to be a vital factor in the community’s subsequent response to the death of George Floyd, an African American man, at the hands of a White police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on May 25, 2020. The AUP community, like many organizations around the world, grappled with questions of institutional racism and how best to support the Black Lives Matter movement. Bing-Way was clear that, for Black and Abroad, the first response was to address the needs of Black community members. “We just needed space to ourselves,” she says. “We never have time to grieve, but with the pandemic, people had time to confront those emotions - and to organize.”

Following a community-wide online town-hall discussion - organized by fellow club member Krystel Nozier - Bing-Way acknowledged the increasing interest in Black and Abroad’s activities from non-Black community members. She knew that a lot of people would be turning to their Black friends for advice on how best to provide support for the movement, and she felt it important for the club to take on some of that pressure. She appointed an Ally Liaison, Thorin Erb, to help with the task. “I told him he’s basically a translator,” she explains. “He’s good at telling people the mentality they should be putting into practice.” Bing-Way cites this emphasis on cultural translation as one of her biggest takeaways from the community’s Black Lives Matter discussions. “It takes a lot for people to understand suffering and trauma,” she says, also commenting that it was essential to distinguish between those making an effort toward understanding and those choosing not to.

The club will be hosting more ally events in the future, but Bing-Way is clear that the focus will always be on the needs of Black students. “We have to be clear about drawing a line, about
what Black and Abroad stands for and who is welcome in these kinds of sacred spaces on campus.” That work, for Bing-Way, includes continuing to push for the financial, physical and mental security of Black students at AUP. In addition to her involvement with Black and Abroad, Bing-Way works with the University’s recently established affiliate group, Black Alumni at AUP, and she holds the newly created role of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Communications Intern for President Celeste M. Schenck. “I just love making it harder for myself,” she jokes. “But collaborating with people is what I really love doing.” And as with the club, these initiatives are designed to continue beyond her upcoming graduation. “What’s that saying?” she concludes. “You haven’t made change if what you want to accomplish is completed in your lifetime.”
FEATURE

A Year Like No Other

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In February 2020, the world watched in shock as the novel coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, China, grew in severity and geographical scope. For higher education, the Covid-19 pandemic quickly became an enormous challenge, as social-distancing measures caused the wholesale migration of classes and coursework online. In addition to planning for the academic impact, AUP’s leadership necessarily paid close attention to the physical and mental health of AUP community members, as long periods of enforced isolation took their toll on students, staff and faculty. But despite the enormity of the crisis, the community reacted with agility and sensitivity - and the lessons learned during the uncertainty of the Spring semester proved vital as France, like many countries around the world, moved into a second confinement period in November to combat the pandemic’s ongoing effects.

**REACTING SWIFTLY, RESPONDING DECISIVELY**

From late-February, before France implemented preventive measures, AUP’s leadership began developing precautionary policies aimed at safeguarding its campus community. A survey was sent to all students, staff and faculty members during spring break in order to identify those who had traveled to at-risk areas during vacation and ensure they self-quarantined upon returning to Paris. Thanks to our small, close-knit community, we were able to account for everyone in just one week, and anyone who had been potentially exposed to
Covid-19 took the necessary precautions to ensure community safety.

Staff and faculty implemented support systems to help self-quarantining community members manage their health, well-being and ability to work or study from home. Guidance counselors were available to speak to any student experiencing emotional distress. IT Services catered to community members’ technological needs, distributing laptops and other equipment to allow remote access to classes. The Health Office worked with the Leadership Team to communicate Covid-19 symptoms and preventive measures clearly and effectively. This collective response to this distressing situation was a first indication of the warmth, kindness and solidarity that our entire community would repeatedly display throughout this unprecedented year. “One of the silver linings of this disruption in our personal, social, political and economic lives has been the remarkable way in which the AUP global community has come together to face the profound alteration of daily life that responsible management of the Covid-19 pandemic has imposed,” says AUP President Celeste M. Schenck.

Throughout the early days of the crisis, The Office of the President sent daily communications to all students, staff, faculty and parents, reassuring the community that every necessary precaution was being taken as the full extent of the pandemic became increasingly clear. “Despite all the obstacles in our path, we have together found ways forward,” says Schenck. “I salute the resilience and fortitude of our students, staff and faculty, and their willingness to reinvent the Spring semester with us.” As March continued, on-campus events and Cultural Program study trips were canceled. The Office of the Provost limited faculty members professional travel and developed a remote learning strategy. A centralized webpage for Covid-19 information was quickly published to keep all constituencies informed. As the community braced itself for more government announcements, students wishing to return home were permitted to sign up for remote education for the remainder of the semester. On Thursday, March 12, President Macron announced that universities must close campuses and move fully online. Four days later, he gave a second speech announcing a 15-day national lockdown in France. This would later be extended multiple times, lasting a total of 55 days.

A GLOBAL EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS ACROSS THE GLOBE

From early March, AUP’s crisis management team began assessing all possible options for navigating remote teaching and learning. When the announcement came that universities would be closing, faculty already had an all-day training workshop on the remote learning transition in the calendar. “We ran simultaneous workshops throughout the day,” explains Dr. William Fisher, AUP’s Provost. “Almost every faculty member contributed. I think it’s true that at AUP we were a few days ahead of what other places were doing.” Alongside an emphasis on technical skills, ensuring faculty members were well versed in the required technology, the workshops focused on how to replicate in-person teaching benefits remotely and how to keep students engaged when working through a screen.

As the Spring semester continued, the Teaching and Learning Center held weekly check-ins to assess the faculty’s ongoing teaching needs and provide a space for best practices to be shared. Innovative replacements were found for canceled assessments, projects and study trips – ensuring that the experiential learning aspects of an AUP education could take place remotely. The Global Professional Skills (GPS) Program, AUP’s signature co-curricular initiative, made sure students could complete criteria at a distance. “It was a lot of people, both students and faculty, learning on the fly,” explains Fisher. “We were paying close attention to how remote learning was
going and improving it constantly all the way through to the end of the semester.” And beyond, in fact, as by April faculty were already looking ahead to the Fall semester. A full range of scenarios was envisioned for the new academic year, from teaching entirely on-site to 100% remote learning.

To accommodate for the widest range of anticipated scenarios, the structure of the academic calendar had to be reassessed. ‘We had to schedule classes in such a way that, if students dispersed to time zones around the world, we wouldn’t have to go in and reschedule anything,’ says Fisher. The solution was to delay the start of semester, to allow for students to obtain visas and complete additional health checks before travel, thereby shortening its overall length by two weeks. Classes were made slightly longer to accommodate — an average student would take on two additional in-person hours a week. An inevitable reduction in extracurricular activities due to the pandemic would ensure the extra workload was manageable. This preparation allowed for the Fall semester to take on a hybrid approach — combining in-person and remote synchronous learning with support for asynchronous teaching methods — which then efficiently segued into full remote learning once a second confinement began.
The Champs-Élysées, one of Paris’s most famous streets, deserted during lockdown.

Students enjoy the annual boat ride at Fall Orientation 2020.
SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN ISOLATION
The pandemic’s challenges extend beyond technological and academic issues: dramatic life changes and forced isolation carry a heavy mental toll. When confinement began, the Leadership Team took the decision to split communications into two streams: one for students who had returned to their home countries to quarantine with friends or family and another for students confining in Paris. Conscious of the additional pressure to adapt to a global crisis, administrative staff worked quickly to establish a Paris-based support network of peers and colleagues to provide students with the resources – and reassurance – needed to tackle confinement.

The result was the Paris Pods Scheme, an initiative pairing groups of 10 to 15 students with a staff volunteer who oversaw the transition to remote learning while playing the role of mentor and friendly ear. “The pods were about building community in new ways, sharing stories and ensuring everyone had a chance to be heard and supported,” says Kevin Fore, AUP’s Vice President and Dean of Student Services. Mentors scheduled weekly check-ins with students – both individually and as a group – to assess their well-being and provide any needed support. Students could voice their concerns and difficulties and were encouraged to make use of the resources provided – from the University’s guidance counselors to the library’s e-resources. “Our small, close-knit community allowed the project to take on a personal touch,” says Fore.

Staff volunteers met online weekly to exchange best practices and flag recurring concerns. They also crowdsourced useful information – such as which museums and cultural venues were offering upcoming online events – that could, in turn, be shared with the student groups. “Pod members constantly learned from each other,” says Fore. “It’s important to make time to connect with others.” The pods became valuable social circles, organizing online activities for isolating students such as digital apéros. Around 550 students were contacted as part of the scheme, and over 400 took part on an active basis. In all, the 35 staff volunteers conducted 1,435 check-ins with students, identifying and resolving over 150 problems – a phenomenal expression of community solidarity.

When France entered a second confinement period in November, a revised version of the Paris Pods Scheme was quickly implemented, building on the lessons learned from its first iteration. New students formed pods with their student advisors – peers who had experienced lockdown measures in Spring and were therefore well equipped to take on a mentorship role. Returning students were able to opt-in to a scaled-down version of the staff-mentor pods. “We anticipated that returning students would be more comfortable with Paris and how lockdown works,” explains Fore. “But there is a real need for people to have a place where they can talk and share their feelings.”

MOVING THE CAMPUS ONLINE
With campus closed, the AUP community lacked spaces to congregate and share ideas for projects, events and initiatives. When confinement began, the Office of Communications developed the AUP Digital Campus – a communal space for staff, students, faculty and alumni to find resources and information to help navigate the pandemic and continue collaborating with peers and colleagues. “The aim was to provide an online space that harnessed the powerful feeling of solidarity on display in the AUP community,” explains Kilian Ordelheide, Director of Communications.

The Digital Campus was organized around the kinds of career-critical soft-skills that a liberal arts education provides, emphasizing the vital characteristics of the global explorer. The “Learn and Work” section was dedicated
to addressing the challenge of switching to remote classes. “Ask and Find” collected community resources, ensuring students could find a staff member who could address any concerns. “Connect and Communicate” highlighted collaborative projects conceived of by AUP community members, while “Create and Play” helped people unwind with creative pursuits such as the Digital Fine Arts Gallery, which displayed quarantine artwork from students, staff and faculty. Weekly challenges kept the community engaged; a thank you “shout-out” challenge, in which anonymous community members celebrated peers and colleagues who had supported them through the pandemic, garnered dozens of heartfelt responses.

Finally, “Explore and Discover” highlighted original initiatives that fostered a sense of community. “We wanted to help community members adapt to confinement and remote learning by encouraging collaboration and drawing attention to people’s projects,” says Ordelheide. “Social distancing certainly didn’t mean we couldn’t interact with each other.” The Good Morning, Global Explorers podcast provided a daily update on news and events across the AUP community, sharing resources and stories in a three-minute bit-size format, with each episode presented by a different community member. The Learning Laboratory video series provided a platform for faculty and staff to engage directly with the academic ramifications of the unfolding pandemic, contributing their expertise to the growing discourse and highlighting how Covid-19 was impacting their own disciplines. Finally, the AUP at Home blog let community members share tips and best practices on adapting to a temporary remote reality; contributors discussed topics such as confinement exercise regimes and how to harness interior design techniques to improve time spent in the house.

“This trio of initiatives provided the bedrock of collaboration upon which the Digital Campus was built,” explains Ordelheide. “They really show how supportive our community can be when it comes together.” All three projects are available online; following confinement, they were permanently integrated into the AUP website. “We wanted to ensure that the community’s increased interest in internal communications wasn’t temporary,” says Ordelheide. AUP at Home, for example, was rebranded as the AUP Community Blog. It now accepts contributions from any community member wishing to share a story with their peers and colleagues. Recent contributions have included tips on settling into Paris and thoughts on how the AUP community can respond to Black Lives Matter.

ENGAGING THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The cancellation of in-person events also had an impact on the University’s alumni outreach. To mitigate the loss of networking opportunities and on-campus talks, the Office of Outreach and Advancement mobilized to give alumni the chance to support and contribute to the AUP community during confinement. “The outpouring of solidarity we’ve seen from alumni and parents over the last months has been really heartening,” says Mary McLean Evans, AUP’s Vice President for Presidential Initiatives. From the outset of France’s Covid-19 restrictions, Evans’ team worked closely with Communications and the Leadership Team to inform parents and alumni of the steps AUP was taking to ensure the health of its community. Parents were also able to reach out to their dedicated representative: Dana Callaghan, AUP’s Parent Relations Manager.

Once the initial period of uncertainty had been navigated and confinement measures set in, Outreach and Advancement organized an innovative series of online events, entitled AUP to
A masked orientation event at the American Church in Paris

A metro sticker reminds passengers to respect social distancing.
A student advisor guides incoming freshmen at Fall Orientation 2020.
You, which offered alumni and parents a glimpse at how remote learning was being implemented across the institution while engaging them in academic discussion. “AUP to You did exactly what its name implies: brought our signature brand of global liberal arts education to community members across the planet,” says Evans. “We asked ourselves: how can we take important questions and immerse alumni and parents in the search for a response?” Faculty members shared their research and discussed how Covid-19 might change their disciplines; staff representatives presented key aspects of the AUP experience to curious parents, exposing them to the innovation and rigor of the University’s online classes; alumni, parents and even trustees brought their professional experience to bear in conversations about their own careers.

Events continued throughout the Fall semester: the entire AUP to You series is now available to watch on AUP’s YouTube channel. In addition to these academic discussions, ongoing events include online social gatherings such as trivia nights. Evans hopes that a renewed emphasis on remote events will offer further opportunities for alumni and parents to be involved in AUP life. “Seeing community members from across the world show up time and again for these events is a wonderful experience,” she says. “It’s characteristic of our close-knit institution that so many former students are eager to show up for the University in such difficult times.”

LOOKING FORWARD
At the end of Spring semester, the AUP community worked together to ensure that the class of 2020 could gather in an online celebration on their planned graduation date. Students logged in from across six continents to celebrate both their academic successes and the remarkable achievements of their peers in completing the semester against overwhelming odds. As Fall semester comes to a close, following a second confinement period in France, Covid-19 continues to have an enormous impact on day-to-day life at AUP. Yet the continued response of the AUP community provides a valuable model of support and solidarity, preparing students to confront future challenges. “Our priority is to continue providing a student-centered, transformative and career-enabling education – while always putting the health and well-being of our students first,” says President Schenck.
ALUMNI CAREERS

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Dr. Les Joynes ’84 is an artist and professor demonstrating versatility and vision in a world altered by a pandemic. His international career allows him to participate in vibrant art contexts, dialogues with artists and an education exploring diversity in cultures.

How would you describe your time at AUP?

Attending AUP in the early 1980s inspired me to envision my future international career. Adopting French as my second language, I discovered how languages expand our thinking and connect us to people. I studied art history, researched the career of 19th-century artist Gustav Courbet, and traveled to East Berlin to see rare masterpieces by Max Beckmann, George Grosz and Otto Dix. When not in class, I visited the Louvre, Pompidou or any of Paris’s myriad other museums.

Ultimately, AUP prepared me for my pathway as artist, professor and scholar. I realized that there is not just one future, but rather there are multiple futures laid out before us. The experiences we accrue in life are as important as the destination. Education continued to be a valuable space to develop my creative vision, and I went on to study in the UK, Japan and Brazil.

You have described your studio practice, FormLAB, as “nomadic.” What do you mean by that?

For me, a nomadic practice is one that extends beyond the studio. In the 19th and 20th centuries, artists’ practices were often narrowly tethered to a studio. More than ever, artists are globally interconnected, creating and exhibiting new work through international galleries, museums and biennials.
Nomadic means exploration. My artistic practice is always moving. Likening Hemingway’s description of Paris as a “movable feast,” I wanted to bring my studio practice with me everywhere I travel. In the past 25 years FormLAB has gone from the UK to the US, Germany, Singapore, France, South Korea, Japan, Brazil, Mongolia and Russia, and will soon also travel to South Asia.

Nomadic also means interdisciplinary. FormLAB has evolved as a way for me to contribute to the fastest growing field in the arts today: artistic research. This process interfaces art-making with interdisciplinary research methodologies. Artists today curate, lecture, write and teach new ways to experience our cultures.

Describe your creative process when planning new exhibitions.

Exhibitions require a balance of planning and open-ended flexibility. Working with curators, I plan my own exhibitions two years in advance; conduct fieldwork on local visual cultures, languages, and materials; methodically outline the project’s objectives; and, finally, build relationships with artists, museums and other stakeholders. I prepare multiple funding applications that outline vision, exhibition dates and milestones, concept drawings, the acquisition of materials, budgets and performance schedules.

What is most meaningful about creative work in an international context?

For me, creativity is most powerful when it is reacting to the unfamiliar. Open-ended experimentation is a recurring theme in my creative processes. Intuition is a muscle that, when flexed, is an essential part of creativity. When it is well exercised, intuition becomes a powerful compass that guides me in every context, no matter how unfamiliar.

Teaching has become an important extension of my practice and research. Teaching is the interpersonal activation of knowledge. I teach from both perspectives of artist and art historian to share with students the richness of the creative experience. I design art curricula, courses and workshops to engage students with blended forms of experiential learning.

How would you describe your philosophy and process as an artist?

That is a question I have been researching for the past ten years, particularly during my time as a visiting scholar at Columbia’s Department of Philosophy. The answer that works for me is: I am the process. Art-making is a dialogue between myself and others, between my cultures and other cultures. Each exhibition or performance I create is unique, owing to its constitutive elements: the collaborators, site, materials and context, and the timing and nature of the experiments we create.

I draw inspiration from pioneering artists who worked with found objects and images like Marcel Duchamp, Kurt Schwitters, Pablo Picasso and later artists like Andy Warhol. Found objects, sounds, ideas and spaces are, for me, mirrors that reflect cultures. I collaborate with local artists to invent new forms of performance that explore old and new, the traditional and the contemporary, the nomadic and the interconnected.
Lecturing on American Neo Dada art at Ullens Museum, Beijing, 2018

© Les Joynes and ARS New York
FormLAB performances on the Great Wall of China, 2017 © Les Joynes and ARS New York

Joynes during a FormLAB performance at the Brazilian Museum of Sculpture, 2014 © Les Joynes and ARS New York
What advice can you offer after navigating your career through the pandemic?

Firstly, see change as opportunity. Opportunity means inventing new systems. During the pandemic I teamed up with graduate students at Columbia to invent a novel educational platform to stream videos, performances and artwork from thousands of New York-based students and faculty. We did this in 45 days - changing how millions in the city access art.

Secondly, realize the need to pivot forward in times of change. There is no going back to 2019. As soon as the pandemic began changing the world, I set to work examining how we could design new blended course structures to engage students in exploring interdisciplinary solutions in creativity.

Thirdly, be ready to help others. I used my time in lockdown to coach and mentor graduate students at both Columbia and AUP, museum professionals at Yale University, PhDs at the University of Melbourne in Australia, and entrepreneurship fellows at the New School in New York.

How do you see your work continuing to evolve in the future?

My work is interdisciplinary and ongoing. I have recently founded KinoForm, an experimental film company. We are currently preparing a series of documentaries on South Asia. My teaching also continues both online and in person using hybrid learning strategies. I currently co-lead a US Department of State “Art, Diversity and Inclusion” workshop for artists in local communities.

I am fortunate to have a career that is ever evolving - and one that is always inspired by others, affecting how I create, teach and serve.
GRADUATING IN A PANDEMIC

The class of 2020 saw its final semester at AUP upended by the Covid-19 crisis. But equipped with the tools of a liberal arts education, graduates are progressing with their post-college lives despite the challenges of the pandemic.

The global liberal arts curriculum that AUP provides prepares students to step into a competitive international job market, bolstered by the career-critical soft skills developed through the Global Professional Skills Program. Though the Covid-19 pandemic has led to one of the most uncertain economic periods in recent history, resilient graduates are facing down challenges with persistence and determination. By the time the class of 2020 celebrated their achievements during an online ceremony this May, many of them had already returned to homes across the world, seeing in the process their post-graduation plans irreversibly changed by travel restrictions and national lockdowns.

The graduating cohort demonstrated remarkable adaptability to these changes. “We were a little confused I think,” says Anis Anghel ’20, who majored in global communications. “But AUP did a great job transitioning to online learning. I don’t think I missed out on anything that I would have been able to do in the classroom.” Upon graduation, Anis returned to Bucharest, where she enrolled in a master’s in international public affairs, aiming to widen her academic experience with a renewed political focus. “It’s really society oriented,” she comments. “There’s a focus on Romania and its relationship to the EU and other member states.” Her university is teaching online this semester, but her positive experience at AUP prepared her to study remotely – she cites a need for flexibility as a valuable lesson of the pandemic.
On top of completing her master’s, Anis will soon start working for an IT and management consultancy. “It was really important for me to have a job to support myself through school,” she says. She and her fellow graduates had been worried about the ways in which employers would react to the class of 2020, but she believes that preparation is key to proving one’s credentials. Before graduation, she worked closely with AUP’s Center for Academic Advising, Careers and Experiential Learning (ACE Center), making use of offerings such as workshops about LinkedIn - a tool she advises her fellow graduates to make full use of - and the job and internship database. Through the ACE Center, Anis secured a communications internship with the International Chamber of Commerce - an experience she credits with helping her find further work. “I know some of my peers also already have jobs. AUP graduates should know that it’s possible, even in these times. Keep the hope up.”

The pandemic hasn’t only caused worries about employment prospects; it has had repercussions on the working practices of nearly every industry. Kathleen Sharp ’20 graduated with a double major in journalism and global communications, opting for the latter major’s Integrated Marketing Communications track.

She notes how the pandemic has accelerated changes in the journalism profession that have caused her to rethink her career plans. “There is a lack of trust from the general public, and a lack of funding, which is ironic because this is one of the time periods where we need unbiased and accurate information,” she explains. She opted instead to broaden her academic experience by studying marketing management at the Grenoble École de Management. “A lot of the skills you need to be a journalist transfer very well to coming up with creative copy,” she says.

For Kathleen, some of the difficulties recent graduates are confronting are offset by her generation’s unique competitive edge: “A lot of us are digital natives who have grown up online,” she explains. “I think that finishing our semester remotely, and under these different physical constraints, makes us better candidates.” She argues that the act of persevering through difficult circumstances, while extremely tough, is a transformative experience - coming, for her and her peers, at a crucial stage of life. “Maybe, instead of doing an internship or landing your dream starting position, you’ve worked on improving yourself in other ways,” she explains. “It’s important to realize that’s something pretty extraordinary.”

In contrast to graduating seniors, master’s students are often balancing the precarity of the job hunt with completing a final project.
Though Bileh Dougsiyeh G’20 left Paris for the US at the end of July, he is still working on his thesis for an MA in International Affairs. His research looks at the deradicalization of former Al Shabaab fighters in Kenya’s northeastern province.

Before confinement, he had plans to conduct in-person interviews in Kenya while looking for work in Paris. “The pandemic took everything and flipped it on its head,” he says. Back in the States, he initially struggled to find work – one particularly frustrating experience was when a potential employer informed him, after the interview stage, that funding for the proposed position had been cut. “I had to take a step back and say, okay, let me look for jobs that mean something to me,” he explains. Soon after, he accepted a position with Democracy International, an organization dedicated to promoting free and legitimate elections around the world.

Following his own experience, Bileh is eager to communicate to his peers the importance of perseverance and personal development. “Recent graduates have demonstrated a level of resilience that I think is an employable trait,” he says. “These are people who have lived through a pandemic, who are facing student debt and the mental toll of dealing with this crisis, and the fact that they have completed their program speaks volumes about their character.”

Bileh believes that the shift to remote learning led to students finding new ways to continue their academic, professional and personal development – despite hardship. As a master’s graduate, he’s particularly keen to acknowledge the difficulties faced by undergraduate seniors, who have seen the in-person elements of their first college experience cut short. “They have gained a lot of grit and strength from this,” he says. “I think that’s going to be huge for them.”

Whether going on to further study or looking to get on the job ladder, the class of 2020 faces unprecedented obstacles – in addition to their transformed final semester. But as these stories show, their display of solidarity and determination through crisis – coupled with a global liberal arts education – puts them in good stead to overcome unfairly weighted odds.
ANAÏS ALIJANI ’12

I am a Promotion and Recruitment Officer at NEOMA Business School in Reims. My job is to promote the school through various career fairs, open days and recruitment events in high schools across France. We also hold preparatory sessions for high school students seeking to attend our institution to help them with their applications. I’m usually out in the field, so I meet a lot of people. This time of year, normally, I would be anywhere but home.

The SESAME examination – a national-level recruitment examination coordinated by 14 French business schools – was canceled due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as were a whole host of career fairs and other in-person events. To recruit for the 2020–21 academic year, we had to base our decisions on student applications only. We weren’t even able to organize online interviews, as the government was concerned that not all applicants would have access to a stable internet connection. I’m usually not involved in assessing applications, but this year I had more than a hundred to look over in detail. It was a lot of work. There’s been a real sense of constant learning. When the first lockdown happened, we taught ourselves how to use videoconferencing software in a matter of weeks. This year, all our career fairs are online. We’ve set up a dedicated phone line for student inquiries, and we use online software to book advising appointments. We’ve even started using Instagram Live! Even though in-person events are canceled, we want to show people we’re here to help. We did hold one on-campus open day between the two confinement periods, with appropriate sanitation measures in place, but that was the exception. It might not be the way we normally do things, but we’re moving forward in new ways.

DANIEL CATALAN G’18

AUP equipped me with the knowledge I needed to prosper as an independent remote worker who collaborates cross-culturally with people worldwide. In July 2019, I launched a boutique career services firm. I overhaul the CVs, cover letters and LinkedIn profile content of my clients in online workshops held over Zoom. My process is unique because I interview these fascinating professionals in real-time and create the texts while they watch and chime in via the screen share feature. My clients are from all walks of life, and around 10% of them are members of the AUP alumni community.

Across the world, AUP alumni have begun to innovate their careers in response to the many shifting work practices and priorities of the Covid-19 pandemic.
The changes to the market brought about by the pandemic, though challenging for so many people, have helped me find new clients. During the first wave of lockdown measures, I rose to the occasion to help those affected by the crisis find meaningful work: people who had either lost their jobs or felt a sudden sense of urgency to shift career direction. In the last quarter, I have helped clients obtain work at, among others: Apple Music, Amazon Web Services, and the United Nations World Food Programme.

The pandemic prompted me to relocate from Madrid, Spain, to the less densely populated Porto, Portugal. Throughout the pandemic, I have experimented with online initiatives to reach new clients. Back in May, I contributed as a writer and editor to a series of articles for a lifestyle magazine assessing the impacts of Covid-19 on people’s lives in locked-down Spain. Writing these articles kept me visible during a tough time and boosted the sales of my career service products. In August, I held an online Q&A on Reddit about career services and living abroad, which made it to the platform’s front page. This brought me over 100 clients in a three-week period. I was working round the clock!

EMILIE MENDES DE LEON ‘11

After AUP, I got my degree in European law, which led to three years working as a commodity trader. I then took a more entrepreneurial path. One of the companies I started was Mystery City Games. We make treasure hunts based on real stories from history, which work like escape rooms, but out in the city. It’s a new way for people to discover spaces around them and for communities to tell little-known stories about their neighborhoods. We started in Amsterdam a few years ago, and last year we worked with partners to expand the concept to London, Barcelona and Naples. We had those games all ready to launch in March 2020. Obviously, the world had other plans.

We were forced to rethink the concept, developing two online games using stories from history, designed to help people explore cities in a different way. We learned new ways to do digital marketing, how to code, and how to operate in a new format. We worked a lot of hours! Our first game, a murder mystery, was created in five weeks. It uses interactive PDFs and a mock police database on our website to immerse participants in 1980s Amsterdam. Our second game is coded online and is based on the story of the Monuments Men, a unit of allied soldiers looking for famous artworks looted by the Nazis during the Second World War. Different teams compete to see how many they can find in a fixed amount of time.

Being an entrepreneur requires a great deal of optimism; you have to be okay with living with uncertainty. But unexpected events are also opportunities. Without the pandemic, this year would have been focused on operations. Instead, we got time to be creative and develop our vision. We got to dream bigger — and that’s an amazing opportunity.
I graduated from AUP’s MA in International Affairs and Diplomacy and now work for a UK research company called Trilateral Research. I am involved in projects that develop ethical and legal frameworks to address the impacts of emerging technologies. As you can imagine, our research has become increasingly relevant during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thankfully, our company has been set up remotely for years, so we didn’t have a huge transition to the lockdown. We are, however, engaging with new questions. For example, as more people work or study from home, critical issues are becoming apparent in relation to cybersecurity, access, and physical and mental health. These concerns are tied to human rights: the rights to safety, health, education.
and nondiscrimination. Individuals are grappling with how to improve their own handling of digital technologies, and policymakers are asking stakeholders how to effectively regulate.

I also work on AI and big data, so I’ve been looking at the digital tracking systems in place to respond to Covid-19. There needs to be a balance between rights such as the right to health and the right to privacy. It’s a constant conversation about ensuring that tracking policies have a legitimate legal basis, are proportionate to public health objectives, and don’t become permanent. An example would be the requirement that restaurants collect information on diners to contribute to test-and-trace efforts. Data must be collected only when necessary and used only for intended purposes. It must also be stored securely and deleted within a reasonable time frame. Any emergency measures in response to Covid-19 need to be reversible. It can be a challenge to regulate emerging technologies when the impact is still unknown and technology is constantly evolving. I love my job because I have the chance to think critically and creatively about shaping the future.

LILLIAN WAGNER ’18

My work has changed a lot. After AUP I started my own company, Limitless Agency. We do events and event planning in Paris and across France. Our primary market is pharmaceutical companies. Before the pandemic, we worked with a lot of hotels, hosting weekend events for up to a thousand people. Clients would invite doctors and academics to discuss their products at various panels and roundtables. That was all canceled when the pandemic hit. We quickly had to create new digital offers, completely pivoting to online events and creating personalized platforms for our clients. We completed the transition in two to three weeks. It was a fun challenge. We would never have explored digital events if it wasn’t for Covid-19.

A big part of what we did pre-pandemic was decor, so we had to go from decorating conference rooms to figuring out how to engage people online. There was also the issue of translating in-person connections to an online platform - for example, the brainstorming discussions and networking opportunities that provide added value at on-site events. It’s been a hot topic for our clients too: how to facilitate doctor–patient interactions in an online setting. We’ve worked with other companies to create content platforms that allow for secure breakout rooms, which doctors need to safely discuss confidential medical information. We’re also working with hybrid methods: filming people in advance and then streaming that online.

My biggest lesson learned from the past few months: when you’re forced to pivot, enjoy it. You’ll learn a lot of skills and can offer new things to your clients. If you fail, that’s okay. Every challenge is a good challenge - no matter how hard it is.
On Thursday, November 19, after a year of changes and challenges, the AUP community came together to set the record for the most donors supporting the University in a single day.
The AUP alumni community is as passionate and cause-driven as our staff, faculty and student body. Throughout 2020, alumni provided unprecedented support during a difficult period for AUP, through online guest lectures, student mentorship programs and much-needed financial contributions - not least on the University’s first-ever Giving Day. This one-day campaign aimed to set a record for the most charitable gifts received by AUP in a single day. Thanks to the 188 donors who raised over €95,000 between them, that record has been firmly broken.

The Giving Day campaign called on community members to help #MakeParisPossible in a year of uncertainty and instability in higher education. “Having participated in the Giving Tuesday movement for the past two years, we decided to launch AUP’s own Giving Day on November 19,” explains Mary McLean Evans, AUP’s Vice President for Presidential Initiatives. “The response was extraordinary, with parents, trustees and even faculty and staff coming together to support the AUP community.”

Contributors were able to allocate their donations across three broad categories: supporting students, including via AUP’s new Black Alumni at AUP scholarship; campus development, specifically via funding next spring’s construction work on The Montessuy Center for the Arts; or la vie quotidienne, an unrestricted giving initiative aimed at ensuring the health and well-being of our students, staff and faculty. Unrestricted donations enabled the University to pivot quickly to temporary remote learning protocols in response to government confinement measures in both March and November of this year.

Throughout Giving Day, several members of AUP’s Leadership Team and Board of Trustees challenged the AUP community to match donations, galvanizing alumni support by pledging to top up individual gifts. “In this extraordinary year, when so many of our students are studying in confinement and remotely from around the world, it is more important than ever to support our community,” comments AUP President Celeste M. Schenck, whose own €4,000 donation added €100 to 40 community gifts. Every donation, whether large or small, helped make Paris possible for our global explorers, shoring up the University’s finances at a turbulent time and having an immediate impact on students, staff and faculty in confinement across Paris.

AUP is a nonprofit organization, and its budget cannot be met by tuition alone. So much of the global liberal arts education that AUP offers is made possible by the generosity of parents, alumni and friends of the University. “We are especially grateful for financial support this Giving Day to make Paris possible not just this year, but for the foreseeable future,” says Schenck. “Your support of the AUP community is deeply appreciated every single day by the students, faculty and staff who benefit from your generosity.”

“Donations provide scholarships and amazing resources like our new Quai d’Orsay Learning Commons, which makes the learning environment so much richer.”
- Marissa Rico ’21
Thank you for your loyal support. We proudly acknowledge the following contributors, each of whom made generous gifts above €1,000 to AUP between August 2012 and December 2020. All gifts, whatever their size, are transformative for our small institution. Although we were unable to include all gifts on these pages, we remain grateful for the steadfast support of all alumni, parents and friends.

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Throughout 2021, the Center for Critical Democracy Studies will be hosting a series of lectures, workshops, roundtables and readings that looks at how we may build political and social solidarity both within and beyond the nation in order to confront today’s essential challenges – be it climate change, racial injustice or radical inequality. Across languages, cultures, disciplines and media, Demos21 will explore essential problems of contemporary democracy, and uncover the shapes that democratic publics and authorities may take in the decades to come. At the heart of the convocation is one vital question: what demos for the 21st century?

aup.edu/demos21