



# CSU ALUMNI MAGAZINE

FALL/WINTER 2015

## **PATROL CAR TO PANIC BUTTON**

CSU Alumni John Kessler's  
Success Story

## **WHERE IN THE WORLD IS SIR MAXIMUS**

Knightly Adventures  
with Jim Shaw

## **ALUMNI CHAPTER UPDATE**

*A publication of Columbia Southern University*





## **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

The Continuing Education Department at Columbia Southern University is committed to a program of public service, outreach and continuing education to share its resources with the workforce to enhance the intellectual capital of all those in need of or who desire lifelong learning and development.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION SERVICES**

CSU offers the following services:

- Continuing education classes
- Conference management services
- CEU provider service

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION CLASSES**

A diverse offering of workshops, seminars and courses are available through Continuing Education.

These classes are offered in a variety of formats including on-site, online and webinars. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) will be awarded for eligible classes. A full list of events can be found at [www.ColumbiaSouthern.edu/ContinuingEd](http://www.ColumbiaSouthern.edu/ContinuingEd).

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- On-site logistics and coordination
- Speaker selection and coordination
- Evaluation and awarding of CEUs

## **CEU PROVIDER SERVICE**

Organizations who would like to offer CEUs for their programs can apply to have CSU evaluate their program and award CEUs.

A member of the Department of Continuing Education will guide you through the application and approval process. There will be a \$25 fee per participant who is awarded CEUs. This fee is the responsibility of the requesting organization or student and will be paid to CSU prior to the CEU certification and/or transcript being mailed to participants. CSU Learning Partners qualify for a discounted rate of \$20 per participant awarded CEUs.

For more information, please contact the Department of Continuing Education at 800.313.1992 [ContinuingEd@ColumbiaSouthern.edu](mailto:ContinuingEd@ColumbiaSouthern.edu) or visit us online at [ColumbiaSouthern.edu/CE](http://ColumbiaSouthern.edu/CE)



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### STUDENT & ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT STAFF

**Amanda Manjone**, Director of Student and Alumni Engagement  
**Sonya Lavett**, Manager of Student and Alumni Engagement  
**Libby Reilly**, Coordinator of Student Engagement & Editor-in-chief  
**Andie Bills**, Coordinator of Alumni Relations  
**Mark Briscoe**, Student and Alumni Liaison  
**Elizabeth Mimms**, Career Development Counselor  
**Heather Kimbrel**, Career Development Counselor

### CONTRIBUTORS

**Billy D. Hayes**, CSU Vice President of University Relations  
**Ron Dennis**, CSU Director of Training and Professional Development  
**Alan Ingram/CSU**, Photographer  
**CSU Alumni:** Lori Bedford, John Kessler, Jim Shaw, Eric Smith

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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Beloved readers,

Where has the time gone? It has been six months already since our very first edition of the CSU Alumni Magazine was printed and the response has been incredible. We are so proud to be able to reach our alumni population in a way that links you to one another. By sharing the stories that you will find in these pages, we are able to form connections with people we may never have met but share a common thread with just the same.

I have been truly honored to get to know so many of you through social media and our networking socials across the country. It is a joy to put a face to those who have completed their degree with CSU and are making such a difference in the lives of those around them. Each one of you are truly special and I am so happy for the opportunity to get to know so many of you.

It is my sincere wish that you will feel connected to your fellow alumni who are also perusing the pages of this magazine. Maybe you can connect through our various social media outlets or meet at a future event in your area. Connecting with each other is so important because it keeps our alumni network alive and thriving. Your CSU experience does not have to end once you receive your diploma and, if you are reading this right now, you have clearly chosen to not let it! Thank you for your part in making our alumni network fruitful. We could not do any of this without you.

I encourage you to continue to put yourself out there for your CSU family. Attend events in your area, reach out to fellow students and alumni, and share your ideas for what you would like to see in future editions of the CSU Alumni Magazine and other endeavors of the Alumni Association. This publication would not be made possible without invested and fervent CSU graduates like yourself. Together, we can rise to exciting heights.

Happy reading,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Libby Reilly".

Libby Reilly  
Editor-in-Chief



**WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

**Do you have questions regarding the Alumni Association?**  
Please send an email to [CSU-Alumni@columbiasouthern.edu](mailto:CSU-Alumni@columbiasouthern.edu)

# LETTER FROM THE **PRESIDENT**

Hello fellow Knights,

Once again, graduation is upon us and a new group of alumni will be joining our ranks.

Congratulations and welcome to all new alumni!

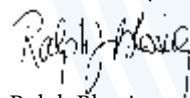
As many of you know, life moves quickly and it gets more exciting all of the time.

The Atlanta Chapter of the CSU Alumni Association has been established and is doing GREAT! It was a fantastic endeavor on the part of all concerned and will be very beneficial as we move forward. The next chapter, the Pensacola-Mobile Chapter, is getting ready to launch. I foresee more and more chapters starting up in the near future. Now is the time for us to give back to our Alma Mater through our involvement in the various activities we hope each association will bring to fruition. It does not require much time.

As I continue to travel around the world for work, I cannot help but be proud of the banner I carry as a CSU graduate. I speak very strongly about the opportunities that have been afforded me because of the knowledge I was able to receive at CSU, which in turn opened many doors. We all have that same opportunity. Let us all carry the CSU torch to every part of the globe.

In closing, I would like to thank each and every one of you for your dedication in completing your studies at such a great place of learning. I know for many of us it was not easy, but we prevailed. The future of CSU lies in each and every one of you. You are now the voices of experience and commitment to an outstanding online institution. Let your voices be heard! Spread the word and allow others to join our ranks as Knights.

Most sincerely,



Ralph Blessing



**SEND US YOUR  
CSU STORY!**

Do you have a story idea for future editions of the CSU Alumni Magazine? Submit your story online at [Alumni.ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Contact-us](http://Alumni.ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Contact-us) or email [CSU-AlumniMagazine@ColumbiaSouthern.edu](mailto:CSU-AlumniMagazine@ColumbiaSouthern.edu)

Your CSU Alumni Association reached an important milestone on June 27, 2015. On this date, the first regional alumni chapter was installed as the Columbia Southern University Atlanta Alumni Chapter.



Written by:  
Mark Briscoe  
Student and  
Alumni Liaison

The formation of the chapter began almost one year earlier in August 2014 when initial invitations to join the chapter were sent to area alumni. It was a slow but steady progression as additional members were added to the rolls each month. In October 2014, chapter officers were selected and trained by the Student and Alumni Engagement department. Knowing that a strong chapter requires a robust membership, we concentrated on recruitment of additional members with our target goal being a membership of 100. In February 2015, we held a networking event for Atlanta area alumni at Fado's Irish Pub in the Buckhead area. This was a wonderful event

# CHAP



## CHAPTER MILESTONE

The first regional Columbia Southern University Atlanta Alumni Chapter reached 125 members and was presented with the official chapter charter at the Cellar 56 restaurant on June 27, 2015.



CSU Atlanta Alumni Chapter officers with the chapter charter: Benjamin Goings (secretary), Robert Hare (president), Charlene Brown (vice-president)

as CSU alumni got to actually see the benefits of joining their alumni chapter. This casual and relaxed environment was the perfect setting for alumni to meet each other and share their CSU story. Strangers become friends and friends help each other with opportunities for promotions and jobs. It was impressive to see the interaction and sharing of information between the participants.

### OUR NEXT REGIONAL CHAPTER:

Recruitment efforts are underway for our next regional chapter, which will be the Pensacola, Florida and Mobile, Alabama chapter. Membership currently holds 60 members and is gaining momentum. Networking events are being planned and we are anticipating installing the chapter at the beginning of 2016.



# TER UPDATE



## **FUTURE CHAPTER LOCATIONS AND HOW TO JOIN:**

There are currently seven additional locations in the process of being established as regional chapters. Those locations are: Hawaii; Los Angeles; New York; Columbus, Ohio; Richmond, Virginia; Dallas/Ft.Worth; and Chicago.

**If you are a CSU alumnus (graduate from an associate, bachelor's, or master's program) and would like to join, follow these simple steps:**

1. [ColumbiaSouthern.edu/alumni](http://ColumbiaSouthern.edu/alumni) and click "Join the CSU Alumni Association."
2. Review the articles and documents.
3. Apply under "Alumni Chapters."

**IT IS FREE, FUN AND EASY TO JOIN.**



# WHERE IN THE WORLD IS SIR MAXIMUS?

In 2015, Columbia Southern University announced our mascot, the Knight. We then took it one step further and introduced you to the CSU Knight, Sir Maximus, who graduated from CSU with a Bachelor of Arts degree in chivalry with a concentration in heroic acts. He truly is the stuff storybooks are made of.

One student in particular, Sir Jim Shaw of Georgia, felt so enamored by the Knight and all he stood for that he decided Sir Maximus needed to experience a few adventures. He has since chronicled these knightly adventures in the CSU Facebook closed group, a private community of chivalrous CSU students and alumni.

Sir Maximus has really shown his true colors since meeting Jim Shaw—quoting Einstein, showing his cluttered desk (which is said to be a sign of genius!), and even posing for a picture with the whole Shaw family.

Jim says he likes Sir Maximus for three reasons: the “old-school approach to honor, integrity and service before self” for which Sir Maximus stands, the fact that he “represents a school that has blessed me with many challenges and opportunities,” and frankly, Jim says, Sir Maximus is just fun to stage in different scenarios.


“I like doing the pictures because it is really out of my comfort zone and it challenges me. It also gives me the opportunity to have fun and show my creative side.”

Jim began his first degree program at CSU in 2003. He worked as a technician at Procter & Gamble on a rotating shift and needed to be present at home for his wife and children; because of this, the online classes and open enrollment that CSU offered made it a great fit.

“The classes gave me a strong educational foundation that enabled me to bridge my past military experience, work experience, and future goals all into one package. I served in the United States Navy as a cryptologist and in the Georgia Army National Guard as an intelligence analyst. The classes allowed me to hone the skills I learned in the service for a civilian career.”

Since beginning at CSU, Jim has completed three degrees and is working on the fourth, a master’s degree in emergency services management. He now works for Equinox Chemicals as the environmental health and safety manager, volunteers with the Civil Air Patrol as a lieutenant colonel, has been named the chairman of the Albany Technical College Industrial System Advisory Board, has been invited as the keynote speaker for many safety functions, and is currently writing a book titled “7 Actions, 7 Values, and the Principled Safety Culture,” which is set to be published this year.

“None of this would be possible without the support of my wife, Michelle, and family. They have all sacrificed and given of their time away from me to follow my dreams and live up to my own expectations. I hope that it shows my kids that they can accomplish a lot when they set their mind to it.”

*Jim sounds worthy of knighthood to us!* 





# CSU IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE ITS 2015 DEAC OUTSTANDING GRADUATE AND FAMOUS ALUMNI RECIPIENTS

Selection criteria included the graduates' academic records and their commitment to society and their professions. We are excited to share their inspirational and significant accomplishments with you!



Written by:  
**Andie Bills**  
Alumni Relations  
Coordinator

## FAMOUS ALUMNI

**Tracy Barnes** | Durango, Colorado

She is a shining example of fortitude and genuine sportsmanship.

Tracy Barnes was looking for a way to acquire an education amid constant travel when she first learned about Columbia Southern University. Not one to shy away from hard work, she earned her bachelor's in marketing in September 2014, getting her one step closer to her dream of starting her own company.


Prior to completing her bachelor's degree, Tracy trained for the Olympic sport of biathlon for 16 years with her team, Twin Biathletes. She has competed in the 2002 World Junior Olympics, earning the silver medal, and the 2006 Winter Olympics. While enrolled in CSU, she also trained and qualified for the 2014 Winter Olympics.

During this time, she earned the 2014 United Nations International Fair Play Award for giving up her spot in the Olympics to her twin sister, who was unable to qualify due to illness. Tracy is also a guest speaker and motivator

to schoolchildren all over the U.S. and serves as a role model to all ages for her hard work and dedication.

Since earning her degree, Tracy has founded and started her own company, T.O.P. Shooting Institute. The institute teaches and enforces an elite level of training to military, law enforcement, competitive shooters and hunters the critical skills of performing under stress.

She is both the CEO and head shooting instructor for T.O.P. Shooting Institute, as well as a sponsored athlete for Advanced Technology International.

"It's amazing how things will come into your life and make an incredible impact on not only your future, but who you are and how you set out to impact the world around you. CSU opens a door for growth and helps you achieve what you never thought possible," Tracy Barnes says. 

## OUTSTANDING GRADUATE

**Craig D'Souza** | Toronto, Canada

Earning his degree was the catalyst to the next phase of his life.

Born in India, Craig D'Souza graduated summa cum laude in 2012 from Columbia Southern University. His decision to continue his education and earn his MBA was based on a crossroads in his career. After researching several online schools, Craig finally chose CSU for its flexible online format and enrollment options.


Famous Alumni  
Tracy Barnes,  
left; Outstanding  
Graduate Craig  
D'Souza, right



Alumni

Craig currently resides in Canada and operates as the senior director of corporate investigations at AFIMAC. He is responsible for leading the investigations department across all lines of business and clients. His talents include organized crime, significant fraud and counterfeit incidents. Prior to this position, Craig worked as a national special investigations team leader for Target, where he assisted and led the development of the special investigations team in order to resolve complex internal and external investigations.

Craig is a member of the DET Honor Society, president of the DECA Ontario chapter, a student ambassador for the Student Leaders at McGivney, a volunteer to several causes, and continues to become engaged in his community. As a former detective constable with the Toronto Police Service with an MBA, he is able to relate to his clients from both a security and business standpoint.

"Law enforcement is continually growing more and more complex and is now being run more like a business. Earning an MBA has given me the pedigree and skills to effect change in an upper management position." 



Written by:  
**Heather Kimbrel**  
Career Development  
Counselor

## STUCK IN A CAREER RUT

Are you having a hard time deciding what to do in your career? Do you feel like a change is in order but your conflicting feelings about your current employer are keeping you from making a change? If you can answer “yes” to either of these questions, you are not alone. Many people experience high levels of anxiety when contemplating a career change, so much so that they cannot find the confidence or motivation to move forward, feeling almost paralyzed. What you are experiencing may feel like a mid-life crisis, which can evoke similar feelings of unhappiness, but in actuality, you are experiencing what is referred to as a career rut.

It will serve you well to set the expectation that working toward happiness will not happen overnight. Reinforce your efforts to make changes. Try not to give into the fear of making a wrong choice, but learn ways to empower yourself.

### TIPS FOR GETTING OUT OF A RUT—WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

**1**

Sometimes you get so burned out that it is impossible to focus on your career. Instead, try taking up a new hobby or picking up one you had in the past. This might sound like the opposite of what you need to do to make positive change, but it just might be the motivation you need to push forward to reaching your next goal.

**2**

If you feel you may be lacking skills in certain areas, consider volunteering or joining professional networks. Not only are you building your base of knowledge, skill, and abilities, but you are building new relationships and expanding your network. Your network can help you find opportunities and can act as a recommendation when it comes time to make a career change.

**3**

If you can pinpoint the source of your career frustration, you will be that much closer to making positive changes. Be honest with yourself and set goals. Do you work as part of a team when you would rather work independently, or do you have a desk job but would rather be

out in the community? There are positives and negatives to each job opportunity; taking the time to identify what lines up as your ideal scenario will keep you from making the same mistakes in the future.

**4**

If you are still passionate about your industry but think it may be time to look for a company that matches your ideal work environment, now is the time to start researching companies you can see yourself working for in the near future. Start by searching for and making a list of local employers that offer positions you might like. Then, see who you might know who works there and can introduce you to a hiring manager.

**5**

If you are looking to transition into a new field, now may be the time to consider going back to school or completing a certification course program. If school is not an option, what do you do in your free time that you could turn into a source of income? Sometimes the course to career satisfaction is not a clear one. Don't be afraid to take risks, you just might discover your true purpose in the process.

**6**

Set a goal and map your path to achieve it. If you have more than one goal in mind, map out a path to achieve each one separately. Making lasting changes may seem overwhelming, but breaking things up into small, manageable items will make the process run much smoother. Set smart goals to measure progress and stay on track.

**7**

Enlist an accountability partner. We all make mistakes and that is okay as long as we learn from them, but they aren't always obvious. Sometime we have to rely on others to keep us going, have someone to bounce ideas off of or keeping us focused. Having someone in your corner when things go wrong will keep you grounded.

**8**

Your ultimate goal is to get out of your current career rut. There is no time like the present to get out your calendar and start setting dates for when you want to accomplish your goals. Give it some time and don't feel rushed; it could take six months to a year to finally figure out where you want to be. Hold yourself accountable and get started. Stay committed and don't lose hope of obtaining true happiness. 🎯

# PUT GOOD IN & GET GOOD OUT



Written by:  
**Elizabeth Mimms**  
Career Development  
Counselor

Hi Elizabeth,

I hope your week is great. I will start by saying thank you for all your assistance; you are an angel. Guess what? **I landed a job as an Industrial Hygienist** at a company that deals with Industrial Hygiene and Environmental Services. I have been working for a month now and I'm being trained so that I can become certified. It really feels great to practice what I have [learned], I am liking it like crazy. I look forward to meeting you at the commencement in October.

**DANIEL BASINGA** | *Received via email August 18, 2015*

**A**s a career counselor, receiving an email like the one above – unsolicited – is the greatest type of update one who works to “empower individuals to reach their idea of success” can receive.

I began working with Daniel in March 2015 when he called Career Services to ask what he could do with a Master’s degree in Occupational Health and Safety with an Environmental Management concentration. He explained that his undergraduate degree was in geography, which gave him “an understanding on how nature operates.” Based on the education and experience gained through a variety of jobs, such as volunteer coordinator, residential counselor and geography instructor, his involvement working with people and the environment “increased [his] desire to learn how to ‘play safe’ with nature,” which he considers “a precious gift from God.”


Fast-forward to August 2015. What a joyous surprise to receive word he had found employment that was not only in his field of interest, but came with incentives such as certifications,

professional training and a true sense of applying education to action. Daniel is a spot-on example of success upon shifting career interests via education and utilizing the student services offered by Columbia Southern University to gain the skills needed to land his dream job. I recently reached out to Daniel and asked what kind of advice he would have for others making a career shift, trying to find direction upon graduation, and what it’s like working in his industry.

Although he was still completing his final classes, he was able to share his experience finding direction after studying geography (a seemingly completely different field) to completing a master’s degree in OSH/EM. Once he explained the connection, however, the two degrees made perfect sense together. “Being a friend of the Earth and nature lover, I’ve always wanted to be part of those who preserve the beauty of natural diversity...one way to achieve this [was] by pursuing a degree in occupational safety and health (OSH).” Daniel goes on to explain, “Why OSH? Environmental pollution is best prevented at the source, which is why safe industrial operations are needed.”

Daniel was in a position many CSU students face. He had returned to school and was pursuing a new occupational calling. When asked about some of the obstacles he had to overcome while attending school *and* making a career shift, he observed, “One obstacle was limited time to tackle my school work, and develop my resume, and then fill out lengthy applications.” His solution to overcoming the challenges of being a student and a job seeker at the same time was “time management and setting targets.”

His ultimate secret to success was “determination through prayer and a positive mind set.” Another aspect of his accomplishments derived from engaging with the CSU Student and Alumni Engagement department.

“Career counselors have been there for me at every step in the quest for a job. [They] provided me with useful websites where jobs / internships in my field of study are posted and encouraged me to increase my network and increased my chances of meeting the right people and opportunities.” 



# Alumni

# PATROL CAR TO PANIC BUTTON



*Written by:*  
Libby Reilly  
*Editor-in-chief*

**“Success is always  
the only option.”**



**J**ohn Kessler began his career in law enforcement in 2001. He joined the police department in Perry, Georgia where he served as a field training officer and drug interdiction officer. His second year there, he was nominated by his peers as Officer of the Year.

In 2006, John married the love of his life, Alison. While John enjoyed changing lives through law enforcement, Alison dreamt of changing young lives through teaching. Shortly after their wedding, the couple moved to Birmingham, Alabama so that Alison could continue her education with more opportunities. John began working at the Alabaster Police Department outside of Birmingham. Life was going well and the couple was happy.

John began serving in a local high school as the school resource officer and it was there that he decided it was time he needed to go back to school in order for his life to make the greatest impact. He decided to work towards his associate degree, but nothing else, at a nearby brick-and-mortar college. While John and Alison were facing some difficult financial times at this point, John got in his car to drive to an evening class but discovered he had no gas in his car nor money in the bank. He transferred the fuel from his lawn mower to his car in order to drive to class.

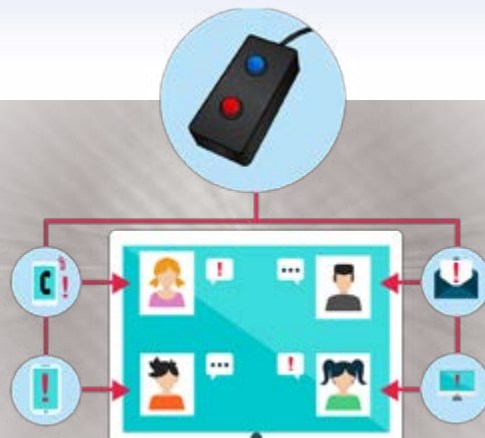
“Not going was not an option,” John says now. “Success is always the only option.”

He called this experience, which could discourage just about anyone, a “turning point.” It was at that moment, while working 65-plus hours per week, attending night classes, not having the resources to even fill up his gas tank, and supporting his wife’s scholastic and professional goals, that John decided he would not stop at his associate degree. He wanted to continue on to earn his bachelor’s degree... but he needed to find a better way to do it.

He soon found an advertisement for Columbia Southern University and John says the rest was history. He completed his Bachelor’s of Science degree in Criminal Justice Administration and almost immediately went on to complete his Master’s degree in Business Administration and Finance in 2012.

At this point, the economy around John was suffering and he realized how beneficial his studies in business had become in his everyday life. “Buying a car, budgeting our finances, all these decisions were made easier and more understandable by applying my newfound business knowledge,” he says.

During this time, John and Alison had their son, John Lewis. On December 14, 2012, while working as the high school resource officer, John got the news of the fatal shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. His son was two years old and John immediately thought of John Lewis’s safety.




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**“ I didn’t know what I was capable of until my knowledge and passion met ”**

**—John Kessler**

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“Hearing news like that, you can’t help but think of your own children. Parents always want to believe their kids are safe,” John says. The director of his son’s daycare asked John to walk through the facilities to test their panic button system and to assess the safety of the building. While in the building, John got on the phone with police dispatch before pressing the panic button. The first push of the button did not get through to police dispatch for two minutes; the second push of the button did not go through at all.

“The director’s and my jaw dropped in disbelief. I will never forget that moment for as long as I live. This outcome was unacceptable. ”

John immediately began searching for an alternative safety system and could find no good options for schools. Everything he found was either ineffective or lacked the intricate details that would be needed in a situation like the Sandy Hook shooting.

John’s solution? He would develop it himself.

“I had no money but success was my only option. I bounced my ideas off some people, swiped my credit card, and had a few investors for my 1.0 system.”

His original idea was just for his son’s daycare center. Over time, he realized he had developed something that could serve other avenues, as well.

John soon joined forces with who he calls an “IT genius,” Allan Wilson, who bought out the other investors and moved their entire operation in-house. That was when Community Response Systems (CRS) was born.

It took John and Allan three months to put on paper exactly how they wanted their system to function and how it would stand out from their competition. John describes his 1.0 version as a blueprint for what was to come.

“I knew we had something because no other company in our field was able to merge extensive information technology expertise and law enforcement to form a simple and effective solution. I wanted to find a safe solution for my children and community, and Allan bringing his IT knowledge expanded my original vision and functionality.”

Community Response Systems is a one-of-a-kind panic button system that initiates an alert to all

*Continued on pg. 15*



# COMMUNITY SERVICE SPOTLIGHT



Eric Smith, *Class of 2012, BS Business Administration*

**G**iving back can be hard to do, especially when you give so much already to your family, your job, and other things that take a piece of your time and attention. How does one find the time and energy to continue to give?

For Eric Smith, father of four girls, husband, and firefighter, he has still managed to give back in one more amazing way. Eric is a Watch D.O.G.S. volunteer in the Raymore-Peculiar School District near Kansas City, Missouri.

Statistics show that around 30 to 40% of school-aged children do not have a male role model at home; the Watch D.O.G.S. program is a way to put a positive male presence in the schools for students to turn to, confide in, or just throw a ball with at recess.

Volunteering with the Watch D.O.G.S. program, Eric gets to know a lot of the students and they look forward to days when he and the other fathers in the

program are around— including Eric’s daughters, ages 13, 9, 5, and 18 months (who hasn’t yet had to hit the books).

“They eat it up. They love having me there.”


The Watch D.O.G.S. program schedules full days for the volunteers to be in the schools, which allows them to be available for reading and math help, test anxiety, helping teachers in the classroom, talking with students in the hall, and playing on the playground. What may not sound like a lot of work makes a huge impact in these young lives.

“Kids will run up to me in the hallway, say, ‘hey, that’s the WatchDOG!’ and give me a huge hug. All of this just because I spend a little time with them.”

Eric also serves on the South Metro Fire District. He says he will occasionally run into kids from the school district while responding to calls from the fire station and they will

always give him a warm greeting. “They will see me and immediately feel comfortable just because I spent ten minutes with them in their classroom or on the playground. I think sometimes they are just looking for some positive attention and it can be very sad. It makes me realize that maybe of all the worrying we do, my kids may have it better off than I thought.”

**“Dad, fireman, the Watch D.O.G.S.... it’s a three-way split and I answer to all of those,” he says.**

As for continuing his involvement with the school district’s Watch D.O.G.S. program, Eric says he did the math. “When my youngest is through, I will have done 12 years with the program. I will stay as long as they will have me.” 



## Patrol Car to Panic Button Continued



John Kessler with his Public Safety Officer of the Year Award, 2004

users and local emergency responders with just one click of a button or a computer mouse. The alert then opens a chat room for real-time communication between all users to stay aware of changes and details in the situation.

John and his partner began installing systems in daycare centers, school districts, private businesses, medical offices, and municipal businesses.


“I realized that our software was so intricate and yet adaptable for all businesses and industries.”

John says his education allowed him to capitalize on his strengths. “I didn’t know what I was capable of until my knowledge and passion met,” he says looking back.

John acts as the CEO of Community Response Systems and is proud that his systems are present in companies and schools in five states so far. Always tapping into his law enforcement background though, he says, “The software is an unmatched tool but it all comes down to incident response. I am absolutely a fan of preventative safety measures like identification badges and visitor reports, but when those things are breached, what do we do? The most important factors are rapid notification and real-time communication. So many tragedies could have had a little bit better outcome could the means of communications at the scene been improved and broadcast over multiple channels.”

When asked about his success and how he got to this point of pride after experiencing some very low times, he responded with advice to others.

“The biggest thing is when you make a decision—any decision—go through with it. There will always be peaks and valleys but if you can learn to pivot, you will prosper.”

John and Alison live in Alabaster, Alabama with their now five-year-old son, John Lewis, and eight-month-old daughter, Gracen. 



\*To learn more about Community Response Systems, visit <http://www.communityresponsesystems.com/>

# Alumni

## MILITARY MINUTE

A graphic of a clock face with a green hand pointing to the 12 o'clock position. The clock is set against a light green background with a subtle pattern.

I left for boot camp in 1982. I guess you can say I joined in January 1981. They had the “Delayed Entry Program” back then. During that time, they had an advertisement slogan stating it’s not just a job but an adventure! Well, it sure was an adventure for me. I went in as a corpsman and later in my career, I was accepted into the Independent Duty Corpsman School (IDC). This happened during a time when they were very selective and were not admitting females into that school readily. They allowed one female to a class, if even that! That was a big win-fall for me, and I was proud to represent the NEC 8425s. I was also dual military. My spouse and I took turns being deployed. One of those deployments turned out to be the first Gulf War! I left a very young five-month-old baby with two other boys at home with my husband. It was a challenge but we both survived! We managed through it all to raise those three boys into wonderful young men. My husband and I will be celebrating 33 years of a happy marriage this November. Some would say that being a dual military family is impossible and those marriages are not successful. I say it made our marriage stronger! I am very active in my church. I am an ordained Eldress, teach bible study in the city jails every week, and travel throughout the state to the state-run prisons. My “second career” turned out to be medical education. I have been a departmental educational chair for more than 11 years. Through this career choice, I have been blessed to receive a number of corporate awards, several divisional awards and local campus awards. I love what I do. My CSU degree, which I earned *summa cum laude*, hangs proudly in my office for all students to see when they enter.



Written by:

**Lori Bedford**

*Class of 2012, BS Health  
Care Administration*

**Named 2014 Woman of the Year with  
National Association of Professional Women**

# THE PRIVILEGE OF LEADERSHIP

Understand the difference between leading and managing

Originally published in *Firehouse Magazine*

Visit [theprivilegeofleadership.com](http://theprivilegeofleadership.com) to learn more.



Written by:

**Billy D. Hayes,**  
CSU Vice President of  
University Relations

**and Ron Dennis,**  
CSU Director of Training  
and Professional Development

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**There is a great benefit when leaders demonstrate a positive outlook about leadership, regardless of the difficulties and challenges that the situation may present.**

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In order for an organization to function effectively, both leadership and management skills are necessary. Sound management skills are required to maintain organizational structure and conduct everyday business operations. However, there is a distinct difference between managers and leaders. Managers are more functional, whereas leaders are more personal. It can be easily compared that both managers and leaders have the functions of directing and guiding. The difference of guiding and directing between managers and leaders arises in that managers accomplish this through enforcing procedures and delegation of tasks, while leaders accomplish it through motivation and inspiration. But nobody defines leadership as easy.

## WHY LEADERSHIP IS A PRIVILEGE

Leadership is often difficult and involves critical as well as tough decision-making skills. The fact is, being placed in a responsible leadership position is a privilege and not a detriment. Leadership is often referred to as stressful and it involves a great deal of burden, as well as pressure; however, the cornerstone of exercising effective leadership is having a clear understanding of the definition of what a leader is and how to do leadership things and not just say leadership things. For example, on July 2, 1863, Union forces were engaged in heavy fighting with the Confederate army in Gettysburg, PA. Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlin of the 20th Maine was ordered to hold the Union left while occupying the rocky heights of Little Round Top. The order given to him: "Hold at all costs." When faced with waves of attack after attack by the Rebel army and having spread his line as thin as he could while using every round of

**H**ave you ever heard somebody be congratulated on a new promotion only to respond, "I'm not sure if it's congratulations or condolences?" The fact is, very few of us are ever promoted into a position that we didn't want or ask for. After all, how many folks have been promoted "against their will?" In most cases, we spend considerable time, energy and resources in professional development to achieve a higher standard both in performance and position. In doing so, we are presented with the honored position of leadership and bestowed with assorted powers that can move a team or group forward.

So the question we ask is why do some feel that leadership is a burden and not a privilege? Could it be that they simply don't understand the true meaning of leadership and confuse their roles as managers as the burden? Let's dig a little deeper to explore this situation.

History provides us a foundation from where many of our values and beliefs are developed. Those experiences often guide us in our actions and

how we respond in situations. With that, we can identify individuals historically (and even in modern times) who have demonstrated tremendous leadership while facing insurmountable circumstances and situations. During the darkest of times and when seemingly all hope is lost, a leader emerges. Before we identify some of these leaders and historical situations, let's look at how leadership is often defined.

When asked "What is leadership?" individuals often quote one of the many definitions offered by various authors or they offer a list of common traits found in great leaders. It is also important to be able to differentiate among the concepts of leadership, followership, management and supervision; however, leadership has often been defined as the ability to motivate or influence others to work/move toward a common goal. Likewise, most describe leadership in terms of identifiable traits an individual may possess, such as visionary, accountable, honest, compassionate, a good communicator, fair and works well with others. In comparison, these terms can also apply to the roles of managers and supervisors.

ammunition they could find, he ordered the famous bayonet charge of sweeping down the hill, repelling the assault, thus saving the Union line and bringing an end to the day's fighting. Chamberlin knew that as the leader, he was in charge. He took charge, and though there were doubts the bayonet charge would work, his men followed him to success. Chamberlin noted later that it was an honor to have been in the situation he and the 20th Maine were placed.

On April 11, 1970, NASA sent three men into space for a return visit to the moon on the Apollo 13 mission. On April 13, when the crew was 200,000 miles from earth, an explosion in the oxygen tank system ended all hopes of a moon landing, with little chance of finding a way of getting the crew back to earth safely. Flight Director Gene Kranz owned the mission and never wavered in his goal of a successful outcome. Whether it was finding a way to get the spacecraft to slingshot around the moon back to earth, finding a way to build a filter with whatever resources on board the spacecraft to address the carbon dioxide issue or identifying a process of conserving battery power for all the systems that would be needed for the return sequence, Kranz demonstrated strong command presence and challenged his team to find solutions with a clear expectation that "failure is not an option." In fact, during re-entry of Apollo 13 into the Earth's atmosphere, many – including Kranz's boss – thought the heat shields that were damaged would fail and the mission would be doomed. Kranz was quoted as turning to his boss and saying, "With all due respect, sir, I believe this will be our finest hour."

In looking at these two historical events, both Chamberlin and Kranz demonstrated clear command presence, communicated their expectations and would celebrate successful outcomes. There is a great benefit when leaders demonstrate a positive outlook about leadership, regardless of the difficulties and challenges that the situation may present. In fact, there is a great deal more to be learned from many leaders in history who faced up to the pressures, responsibilities and consequences when confronted with a critical leadership

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## Being an effective leader includes having a clear understanding of the strengths of the team and pushing them to live up to those strengths, making everyone on the team responsible for success.

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challenge, and time and time again, the leaders who succeeded more often than not were those who demonstrated that their role as a leader was indeed a privilege regardless of the situation.

What cannot be overlooked in the equation is followership. Chamberlin and Kranz were both successful in the situations they faced because there were individuals who followed. Chamberlin would have been killed or captured quickly if he had run down Little Round Top by himself with sword in hand and nobody following. Likewise, Kranz would not have had time to design a filter system to address the carbon dioxide problem and sit in the simulator to find the battery efficient sequence while at the same time watching over all the operations in motion. Both had followers who were motivated and influenced, and in all regards, gave Chamberlin and Kranz "permission to lead." These followers trusted the leader, served the leader and their actions, behaviors and commitment made the situation successful, thus making the leader and situation successful.

John Maxwell, the noted author of many leadership books, emphasizes the importance of knowing oneself, knowing one's followers and understanding the situation. More effective leadership decisions are made when these decisions take into account knowledge and understanding of leaders, followers and the situation. Similarly, Pat Summit, the legendary coach of the Tennessee Lady Volunteers, emphasizes that being an effective leader includes having a clear understanding of the strengths of the team and pushing them to live up to those strengths, making everyone on the team responsible for success.

Kranz was able to demonstrate confident and effective leadership because he

first understood himself and what his responsibility was: to bring back the imperiled crew to Earth safely. He certainly understood his followers and their individual strengths. He had built a solid team that was innovative, forward thinking and empowered to solve problems. He also understood the three astronauts on board the spacecraft and what their skills and capabilities were. Finally, he understood the situation. One of Kranz's leadership tenets was clearly communicated to everyone involved: failure was not an option. Indeed, he made everyone responsible for the success of the rescue mission. Kranz often emphasizes the importance of teamwork as an essential element in any situation and what the difference is between the "I" and the "we" component of the team, "...because when the time comes, we need our people to step forward, take the lead, make their contribution, and then when they're through, return to the role as a member of the team."

### **BOTH ARE NECESSARY**

There have been numerous debates about which is more important, the leader or the follower. It is our opinion they are indispensable to one another. The leader communicates the vision and the goal, but it is equally important for the follower to see the vision and believe in the goal to move forward. In fact, out of followership emerges leadership.

Think about this: followers seek confirmation of being led. It is truly up to the leader to communicate the direction and success to the group for validation and affirmation of moving toward a goal. Or is it really all up to the leader?

*Continued on pg. 18*





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**Often, it is the first follower who steps up and gives validation of the vision and/or mission.**


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Often, it is the first follower who steps up and gives validation of the vision and/or mission. With that, momentum and inspiration is built by the group to follow. In reality, the first follower(s) is a sub-leader(s) while at the same time being a servant follower.

People don't always need permission to step in and lead. When circumstances require it, good leaders firmly take charge and recognize that leadership is indeed a privilege, but it's also a responsibility. One final example – on June 6, 1944, Allied forces launched an invasion of France on the coast of Normandy. As part of that invasion, on Omaha Beach, wave after wave of young men stormed the beaches only to be slaughtered by

the Germans who had a solid stronghold of the heights and cliffs overlooking the beach. Arriving on the beach during the second wave was General Norman “Dutch” Cota, walking tall with a cigar in his mouth and an aura of necessary leadership confidence as he observed the carnage around him. More noticeably, he did not see any “command and control” (as they call it in the fire service) of the situation. As he found a young officer in the Army Rangers, he asked who was in charge. The response he received was that nobody knew because most commanders were killed or wounded in the initial wave. Cota took command of the situation, advised the young officer that they were going inland to fight in place of dying on the beach and

that the “Rangers would lead the way.” Still today, the motto of the U.S. Army Rangers is, “Rangers, lead the way.” According to historians, Cota exercised three important leadership actions. First, he recognized that there was no leadership and as a result, Allied troops were trapped in fear and were unable to take effective action, so he injected leadership when and where it was needed. He took charge. Second, he communicated a clearly defined plan for everyone to follow. He had to get everyone off the beach and up the cliffs. Third, he communicated the importance of overtaking the German defensive stronghold and moving inland as a critical tactic necessary to accomplish the mission of liberating France and ultimately defeating the enemy.

Regardless of the leadership position we serve in, there are those who depend on us. While the external customer depends on quality service delivery, our internal customers rely on positive attitude, behavior and commitment. If we do not portray that it is a privilege and an honor, then why would they choose you as the one to follow? 



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800.977.8449 ext. 1357 | [ColumbiaSouthern.edu/ContinuingEd](http://ColumbiaSouthern.edu/ContinuingEd)

# STUDENT & ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT



Written by:  
**Amanda Manjone**  
*Director, Student and  
Alumni Engagement*

As an alumnus from Columbia Southern University, it may surprise you to learn that in this great big world, you are surrounded by 30,000 others who have shared similar experiences at your Alma Mater. In the virtual realm, it is far too easy to be surrounded by many people, yet still feel completely alone and isolated. This was the driving force behind the creation of the Student and Alumni Engagement department in late 2013. We strove to find a way to bring the feel of a traditional campus to our online students and alumni.

The main goal of Student and Alumni Engagement is to involve students and alumni, not only with the university, but with one another. How have we been achieving that? In taking a new approach, SAE has been traveling all over the United States to host networking socials. We have been to areas such as San Diego, Boston, New Orleans, Atlanta (home of our very first alumni chapter), Dallas and Chicago. An initiative has been launched to create regional alumni chapters that will serve as a way for you to network, whether it is for personal or professional purposes, to make friends, or introduce your friends and family to CSU.

One section of SAE is Career Services, which is a huge benefit to you as a CSU alumni. Career development counselors are available to assist in your job search, professional correspondence creation, and guide you through the interview process. They offer these services to all members of the CSU family, free of charge and even after you graduate.

It has been wonderful meeting those of you who have attended these events, exchanged information and advice with your new friends, and left with a smile on your face! Our hope is to meet many more of you in person in the months to come. We are always here for you and our hope is that you keep CSU an important part of your life.

To learn more about all the benefits of the Student and Alumni Engagement department and how you can get involved in clubs, organizations, future events, and more, visit [ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Community](http://ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Community)



## Delta Epsilon Tau Honor Society Columbia Southern University Beta of Alabama Chapter

As an international honor society, the Delta Epsilon Tau was established to recognize the achievements of individuals who worked diligently to acquire new knowledge and skills from an accredited distance learning institution.

### WHO CAN APPLY?

Any Columbia Southern University alumnus with a bachelor's or master's degree.

### DET Recognition Criteria

CSU graduates must meet the following criteria to be invited to join DET:

- » Earned a bachelor's or master's degree from CSU with a minimum of a 3.8 GPA.
- » Submit a 250-word essay demonstrating leadership and active participation within your community, civic, or professional groups. Please keep in mind that this is a professional essay and will reflect your education and intellect in order to be considered for this esteemed honor society. In order to engage your reader and admitted into DET, one should use suitable vocabulary, proper grammar and punctuation, organization and focus, and a creative, distinctive voice.
- » Join and participate in the CSU Alumni Association and CSU's LinkedIn Alumni group.

### APPLY TODAY!

For more information or to obtain an application, please visit [ColumbiaSouthern.edu/AlumOrg](http://ColumbiaSouthern.edu/AlumOrg)



# STUDENT & ALUMNI EVENTS

The Student and Alumni Engagement department has been traveling the country in 2015, meeting students and alumni at various networking socials and other events. Each event is planned based on the amount of students and alumni in that specific area and requests from you! These events are a great way for alumni to meet other members of the CSU family, ask questions, and maybe even meet potential employers or life-long friends.

## EVENTS HAVE BEEN HELD IN:

San Antonio, Texas	Nashville, Tennessee
Dallas, Texas	Atlanta, Georgia
Montgomery, Alabama	Chicago, Illinois
Orange Beach, Alabama	Washington, DC
Birmingham, Alabama	Boston, Massachusetts
Jacksonville, Florida	Providence, Rhode Island



We are always open to suggestions on places we should go or different events you would like to see held. **Let us know what you think!**  
Contact [CSU-alumni@columbiasouthern.edu](mailto:CSU-alumni@columbiasouthern.edu)

## Upcoming events:

New Orleans, Louisiana  
Orlando, Florida  
Pensacola, Florida  
Mobile, Alabama



## Stay connected with us!

Do you want other ways to stay connected between live events?  
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# Alumni



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# CSU ALUMNI LIBRARY

## DR. JULIA E. ANTOINE

MBA, 2006

Dr. Julia E. Antoine began writing professionally at the age of 19. At that time, she wrote short stories for the local radio station in her hometown is St. Lucia. She gave up writing when she moved to the United States to attend college. She has since earned several degrees, including two masters (one from CSU) and a doctorate in Higher Education Administration from Northeastern University in Boston. During the course of her schooling, she wrote and published a working curriculum for a career school, a business manual and its answer key, as well as other literary work. In 2010, she revisited her first love, writing for fun and enjoyment. Dr. Antoine writes children's books under her given name and romance novels under her pen name, Ju Ephraime.

## LISA COLLINS-HAYNES

MBA, 2014

Lisa received her undergraduate degree and MBA from CSU. While her undergraduate degree was in hospitality and tourism, she knew she did not want to work directly in the hospitality industry. She now focuses more on the tourism side and works as an international travel writer and photographer. Lisa travels the world looking for new perspectives to write about and share with readers. She currently works as a freelance writer for several online and printed publications.



In the last three years, Lisa has traveled to 25 countries and six continents to cover in her articles. She says, "While the sun remains the same...the sunset leaves different footprints across the sky in each country. It's been an eye-opening experience and I credit CSU for arming me with the necessary tools to navigate through the systems of this industry."

## JJ HENSLEY

MS Criminal Justice, 2010

J.J. Hensley is a former police officer and former Special Agent with the U.S. Secret Service who has drawn upon his experiences in law enforcement to write stories full of suspense and insight. Hensley, who is originally from Huntington, West Virginia, graduated from Penn State University with a B.S. in Administration of Justice and has a M.S. degree in Criminal Justice Administration from Columbia Southern University. He lives with his wife and daughter near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



Hensley's first novel, "Resolve", was named one of the Best Books of 2013 by Suspense Magazine and was named a finalist for Best First Novel by the International Thriller Writers Organization.

He is a member of the International Thriller Writers and Sisters in Crime. Portions of the sales from his second novel, "Measure Twice", go toward breast cancer research through the non-profit group Par for the Cure.

## DR. AMBROSE E EDEBE

MBA, 2010

Dr. Edebe, who received his MBA with CSU and holds many other degrees, has authored the book "The Manager's Handbook", which will provide students, supervisors, managers and others with a proven solution to the people problems they face on the job.

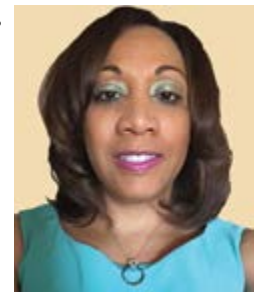


After relocating to the United States in 1995 from England, Dr. Edebe served at the Baltimore, Maryland City Department of Social Services and retired as the district manager in 2009. He currently serves as the president of Trinity Professional Services, LLC and Trinity International Theological Seminary, in Maryland.

## YOKEITHA A. RAMEY

MS Occupational Safety & Health, 2007

"Drummer Boy: A Glimpse Into the Life of Dinerral Shavers" tells the story of Ramey's brother, Dinerral Shavers. He was murdered in New Orleans, Louisiana on December 28, 2006. Dinerral was a mentor and teacher to the students at L.E.Rabouin High School in New Orleans, was a member of the Hot 8Brass Band, and was loved by everyone. The book is a biographical journey into the life and death of Dinerral Shavers.



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