

# LECTURER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Dear Colleagues,

Happy New Year! Thank you for supporting the Lecturer Advisory Committee (LAC) and participating in our past events, and we look forward to another productive semester together with you!

As part of our yearly cycle, the LAC will hold **elections** this April to welcome new members. This year, we have **3** available seats in the **Humanities** division, **1** in **Social Science**, and **1** in the **School of Professional Studies**. Serving on the LAC is a rewarding opportunity to build connections within the lecturer community, contribute to initiatives that enhance faculty experiences, and help shape the future of lecturer advocacy at Columbia. We encourage you to consider running for one of these roles. If you're interested in learning more, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Best regards,  
Shaoyan & Joseph  
On behalf of the LAC

## Upcoming Event

### American Language Program 2025 Winter Conference

Free for Columbia faculty, the conference is primarily focused on English as a second language education, but educators teaching other languages or in other educational contexts may find the conference relevant and applicable to their teaching.

**Time:** Saturday, February 22 · 9:45am - 3pm EST

**Location:** Faculty House, Presidential Ballroom

**Registration:** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/american-language-program-alp-2025-winter-conference-registration-1096231230119?discount=ALPcomp25>

## Celebrations

### Office of the Provost Spring 2024 Dialogue Across Difference Seed Grant Awardees

- Ovita F. Williams, Lecturer in Discipline, School of Social Work
- Amy A. Starecheski, Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology
- Sayantani Dasgupta, Senior Lecturer, School of Professional Studies
- Elisabeth B. Zapol, Lecturer, Department of Sociology
- Susan Mendelsohn, Senior Lecturer, Department of English and Comparative Literature
- Aaron Ritzenberg, Senior Lecturer, Department of English and Comparative Literature

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE LECTURER AWARDEES!**

*In this issue:*

**EVENTS**

**CELEBRATIONS**

**FEATURED LECTURER**

## Featured Lecturer



### ***Tell us your story; how did you get to SPS and Columbia University?***

I come from a family of teachers, so I guess I was destined to be in education, but I didn't take a direct path. I was doing a lot of personal training on the side in California, where I'm from, and I realized I really enjoyed working with people. What resonated was seeing the development and the evolution of that individual athlete, if you will. The reward I received from that interaction was something I quickly connected to teaching: that wonderful exchange that takes place when you get to really feel the value of what you're doing. At that time, coaching a boot camp on the beach in Santa Barbara, I decided I was going to go to graduate school. What's so funny about this, when applying to graduate school, I remember speaking to the program director at Georgetown University, and he said: "Let me get this straight: You coach a boot camp on the beach every sunrise and sunset in Santa Barbara, California ...". And I remember thinking: "He's going to think I am not the right caliber, that I'm not smart enough to get in, that I don't really want to be there..." and he said: "Keep doing that until you are forty, and then apply to graduate school!" But I knew that I really wanted to teach, and I wanted to teach at the university level. So I went on to get my Master's, at Georgetown, and my Ph.D. I worked through grad school with the direct intent to become a full-time faculty member.

Eight years ago I joined SPS in the Strategic Communication Program. There have been a lot of changes during my time at SPS, and where we find ourselves now is a great place. I think we are on the right trajectory, bringing quality students to our School that understand that special Scholar/Practitioner model that we offer. I find that our curriculum is becoming more robust as it is balanced with a student-focus and industry perspective. In addition, there has been a real sense of community that is being built here at SPS.

**KEVIN VISCONTI**  
**SENIOR LECTURER AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM IN THE DISCIPLINE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION, SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES**

### ***What advice would you give incoming lecturers?***

The advice I would give to other lecturers comes from the way that I teach and what matters to me. Going back to Georgetown for a second; Georgetown is a Jesuit University and one of the things that I learned there, other than the course material, was what those affiliated with the Jesuit religion called *Cura Personalis*. *Cura Personalis* means the care for the development of the whole person. This fundamentally changed the way that I think about teaching. It's not just what happens as a student in the classroom, but it is the care for the development of the whole person that truly matters. We have that responsibility as teachers and educators. We're teaching people who are going to be leaders; they are going to be managing teams and organizations; they are going to be participating on a global level. My advice would be to recognize that what happens within the classroom is of course important and valuable, but it might be important to consider that what happens when our students leave our classroom becomes even more important. We need to instill in them thoughtfulness, that mindfulness, that awareness that they have a responsibility not just for themselves but for the whole of society.

### ***What's the best part of being a lecturer at SPS at Columbia University?***

I just came back from presenting at an international teaching conference in Barcelona, and I think that there is a lot that comes with representing Columbia wherever we go. What I think is the best part of being affiliated with Columbia, with SPS, is that we have such a strong foundation, and then we have a chance to demonstrate even more of what Columbia has to offer. There is such phenomenal expertise that our people are bringing to the students in the classroom and to the community not just at SPS but to Columbia as a whole. And I think that when people have high expectations of us, it drives us to produce even more, or at a higher level than we might have originally. We get to not only represent the university, but to elevate it. And I hope, and this is sensitive, so I don't know how best to say it, but I hope there is a new understanding of the value that lecturers in the School of Professional Studies, and the part-time faculty in the School of Professional Studies, are all bringing to Columbia. There's so much that we are doing in our School that is new, exciting, dynamic, relevant, and urgent. So the more that we can broadcast that not just to the Columbia community, but beyond, I think that becomes the best part of what we get to do. And, of course, having said all of that, for me it still always comes down to what happens in the classroom. It kind of brings our conversation full-circle: I come from a family of teachers and educators. We understand and have learned how rewarding that exchange can be with the student in the classroom. It's not just about what happens in the classroom, or in our program, but it's also about what happens when students leave our School and the change they make in the world.