

# The Wagnerian

Raising awareness at Wagner College since 1934

Wagner College

Friday, October 12, 2012

Staten Island, N.Y.

## Celebrating President Guarasci



Photo by Lee Manchester

Located across from Harbor View Hall, the anchor is a Wagner icon. In August, orientation coordinators Chris DeFilippi and Allie Dufford and a team of peer leaders painted a message to welcome the freshmen. President Guarasci paused at the anchor before welcoming the Class of 2016.

He has invented the Wagner Plan, introduced programs for experiential learning and civic engagement, created the Port Richmond Partnership and expanded the Wagner College endowment.

He is Louis Richard Guarasci, the 18th president of Wagner College.

Elected unanimously by the Board of

Trustees on April 12, 2002, he officially took office seven weeks later.

Dr. Guarasci is a friendly face around campus, chatting with students on the Union Terrace, waiting in line for his smoothie in the Hawk's Nest, or just passing by in the Main Dining Hall.

He greets everyone with a smile, and

some with a hug or a kiss on the cheek.

This issue, a special edition of the Wagnerian student newspaper, pays tribute to Wagner's leader, scholar, mentor and friend with anecdotes, photos and a timeline.

We hope this Wagnerian will serve as a keepsake marking this president's decade of service.

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with the  
president

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at a decade  
of service

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President  
Guarasci's life

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President Guarasci looks over the East River from Brooklyn, where his father, Louis, swam as a child.

Photo by Anna Mulé

# A president's view

**Editor's note:** Five *Wagnerian* staffers — Bryan Grandison, Alyssa Brown, Danielle Lucchese, Amanda Hastings and Caroline Mauduy — interviewed President Guarasci on Sept. 18 for this special issue. It was a wide-ranging conversation in his fourth-floor Union office. Here are some excerpts from that interview.

## What are the most challenging and rewarding parts of your job?

To me, the institution is about learning. There is lot of youth to learning, and the youth have vitality and openness...they give me a lot of inspiration. The youth are interested in getting somewhere in their lives. They don't come here with a sense of entitlement. This experience means something to them. The biggest challenge with students is getting the institution to focus on students and learning. They keep the eye on the prize, and the prize is learning.

## What do you enjoy most about working with college students?

Students make the job worthwhile. I enjoy problem solving. The difference between my provost job and

the president's job is that the provost job is teaching a course with a very exact syllabus [while] the president is doing the same job without any syllabus at all because it just comes at you. You have to move within a variety of issues within an hour, figuring out what's most important and less important. You're...[like] a cab driver because you need to entertain strangers, take money and know where you're going.

## What is your focus at Wagner?

Creating a set of educational experiences for students that are deep and broad and help them become cosmopolitans and worldwide thinkers and helping them become engaged citizens. [You are] using education to make your world better; that is the whole purpose of education. The goal of all of it is that our students

become civic professionals who have a series of publics that have to be served.

## What has been your biggest accomplishment at Wagner?

I'm very proud of the civic engagement and watching as students take it as their own and organize all the EYH trips to Kenya and Bangladesh and expand the Wagner Plan to have broader, deeper international experiences. [The] goal is to get to 300 students abroad. [The study abroad program] went from 10 to 150. The other goal is making them affordable to students. Another thing is the enhancement of the campus. Building Foundation, redoing Main Hall, getting more technology. I'm never satisfied because I see all these little things that need to be fixed. I am happy because we are creating a good living and educational experience. Went from \$4 million to \$70 million endowment; we use this for scholarships. [The school's] reputation has gone up in the [past] 10 years. [The] incoming freshman class has an average of 90. Fifteen years ago, it was quite different. I am very proud of the faculty doing

the kind of work they do because it is a very involved plan.

## What are your goals for Wagner over the next 10 years?

The goal is to get a new, major, high tech academic building built. We need overall \$40 million for that building across from Foundation Hall. Classrooms are going to evolve into problem-solving settings. We're going to use the classroom time to use the Internet to engage the issues, to research in class, and solve and discuss the problems; link what we're learning to what other classes are learning globally. Business communications Skyped with a class in Greece. As the world becomes truly flat, I can see much more of linking classes together... calling the building "The Center for Global Learning" and have in it education, nursing, and business, and maybe a few other programs in there. I want it [the building] to be [like] your experience in an Apple store or a Starbucks with a lot of stations going on, linking out-of-class learning with in-class learning. It has to be a building that has lots of in-hall gath-

ering spots, whiteboards everywhere, [and] computers everywhere, so you can wander. Two, I want to be able to get the endowment to \$100 million to make this an affordable place. Tuitions are way too high, [as are] energy costs and technology costs. We need to get ready for tablets and project tablets onto screens and project screens onto tablets. The last thing is really kind of renovating and upscaling the old buildings. Nobody ever did preventative maintenance [for the old buildings]. We are moving into a different paradigm of learning.

## What is the greatest gift you have received from Wagner?

I've been a very blessed person and I've had a lot of support from senior staff and faculty; they have given me that gift. The honor is just working here and being part of a community that's so focused. I've been blessed with a tremendous amount of support.

## Describe yourself as a college student. What were you involved in?

I was a juvenile delinquent as a high



school student. I hated schooling, absolutely hated authority, but I loved the feeling of learning and discovering. [There was] no sense of freedom of expression. When I got to college, I was ready to go. I was a commuter at Fordham University. I lived in Brooklyn, so there was a three-hour commute, so I did all my studying on the train. When I got to college, I fell in love with learning. I was an economics major, philosophy minor; I loved literature, couldn't get enough of history. I had the freedom of the city. I spent all my weekends in Manhattan: museums, plays, movies, cafes. This city is such a great place to learn and grow. I was the vice president of a fraternity. My biggest contribution was to take everybody's money in cards. I went to Indiana University for a master's and Ph.D. [They had a] very active and big student government there. The budget then was \$400,000 for student government ... 40,000 students, three bus lines on campus. I was the chief justice of student court. We were very active in setting up [the] daycare center and working co-ops.

**How do you handle stress and what do you do in your spare time?**

I'm a big reader. I read six papers a day [including] *the Financial Times*, *the New York Times*, *the Staten Island Advance*, *the Wall Street Journal*, *the San Francisco Chronicle* and *the Daily News* to see what others are thinking. I love music. I love opera and I love jazz and I like west coast or cool jazz, like Miles Davis and Jeff Baker. Those are de-stressers for me. To increase my stress I watch the N.Y. Jets play football and N.Y. Mets play baseball. I lock myself in the room, like Wolfman. Carin and I watch a lot of theater in Manhattan and we love to cook. I love cooking. When I was a professor and my wife was a principal, and our kids were little, every sat night I'd make pizza. I love Chinese food and I would cook and eat Chinese food for three weeks straight. Cooking is a way I destress. I like literature as opposed to junk. I tend to read Irish feminist Ann Enright.

**What is number one on your bucket list?**

I don't have a bucket list — I should probably get one, shouldn't I? I always wanted to go to spring training in Florida. Baseball was big when I was a kid. A few years ago, my son, who lives in Milwaukee said, 'Let's fly to West Palm Beach, and watch spring training.' [During this trip] his luggage was sent to Delhi, India so he didn't have any clothes and he, like his mother, loves to shop and has to try every piece on. I've talked to my family about going to Alaska ... and then I think we've talked a lot about renting a house for a full week in Tuscany, and having a wonderful time. The book I'm writing is now on my stress list.

**Describe your perfect day.**

Perfect day? I had a perfect day Sunday. We went to the Boathouse on 72<sup>nd</sup> Street in Central Park. We had a perfect dinner and a long walk in Central Park and saw about four different free concerts. We saw a

man playing Bach on the violin. It was a delightful day. The epitome of places to be is the River Café in Brooklyn, next to the Brooklyn Bridge. It looks right back at the New York skyline on the water. You can almost touch the skyline. I take people I care most about to the River Café and have a wonderful conversation. Good food, good friends, good conversation.

**What's your favorite place on Staten Island for friends and family?**

One is ... Joe and Pat's [pizzeria]. The best place for food, for a full dinner experience, is Bocelli's on Hylan Boulevard. My favorite place to buy food is Pasticceria Bruno on Forest Avenue. I grew up in an Italian family where Sunday dinners were sacred ... lots of different personalities around the table, some crazy, some loving. You get used to dealing with a lot of personalities.

**What's your favorite food?**

Pizza. It's the most popular food in the world; it's a universal food and my all-time favorite food. We could go for an hour and a half on the food thing.

**What was your most embarrassing moment in college?**

I was taking summer courses at Fordham's downtown campus and I was trying to take calculus and I would get a nice hero sandwich after working hard all day. I'd grab this sandwich, jump on the subway, get off in Lower Manhattan, and go to my class. I got to be friends with one teacher. I said to him, "What's your regular job?" and he said, "This is my regular job." I thought because he was teaching at night, he had another job ... I felt bad for making him feel so small.

**Who is your role model?**

Oscar Hammerstein. Google him and read the words to any number of his songs. "Carousel" deals with domestic violence; he understood what it meant to live in a democracy and a democratic culture. It was about diversity and inclusion and celebration. He knew how to live, and he knew how to die. I have his biography next to my bed.

**How do you get to know students?**

When I'm here, I tend to wander into the dining hall or Hawk's Nest, and my usual question is, "What three things do you like about Wagner, and what three would you want to change?" I get a lot of my best ideas from students. People say "hello" to each other on campus, and people who come here are shocked by that. We really worked hard creating a culture on campus of community. Good places are about having a good vision on what you want, having good food, and having good humor.

**What's your favorite meal in the dining hall?**

Taco Tuesdays. It comes and goes. They addict you, and then they cut you off. I wanted to bring protein smoothies into the Hawk's Nest, using Greek yogurt so you can eat these delicious smoothies with pro-

tein, yogurt, no fat, no sugar. I'm not too keen on their pizza; they're working on it. Finally got the Dunkin' Donuts downstairs, and got the Starbucks to a point where I can deal with it.

**What are your favorite sports at Wagner?**

I love the basketball games, because so many people come to them and you have a small place with a lot of noise. I love professional football and it's getting harder and harder to watch. I used to love to go to a baseball game, but now every professional sports event thinks they have to blare music in between plays and I hate it. I used to love meeting new people at the games. I don't enjoy professional sports as much as I used to.

**Where do you and Mrs. Guarasci like to vacation?**

Right outside of San Francisco, called Cavallo Point [resort]. You have to go there. The Sunday brunch is informal, but elegant.

**What does your daily schedule look like?**

My schedule is on note cards: meeting with two professors who got a grant ... meeting students ... student town hall meeting. Issues come along the way. Some days are even longer, running well into the evening. Last night I taught a class from 6 to 9. I don't have one evening free from now to Thanksgiving. I get energy from other people.

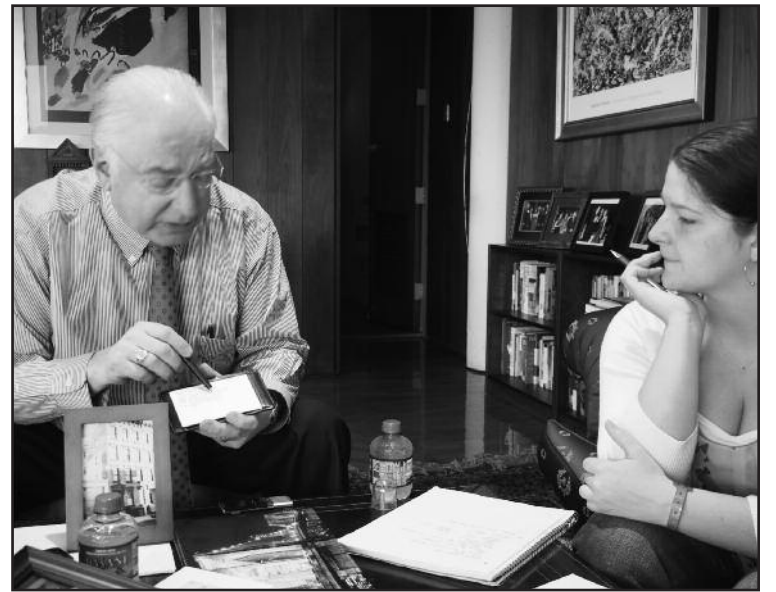


Photo by Bryan Grandison

President Guarasci explains how he uses index cards to get through a busy day.

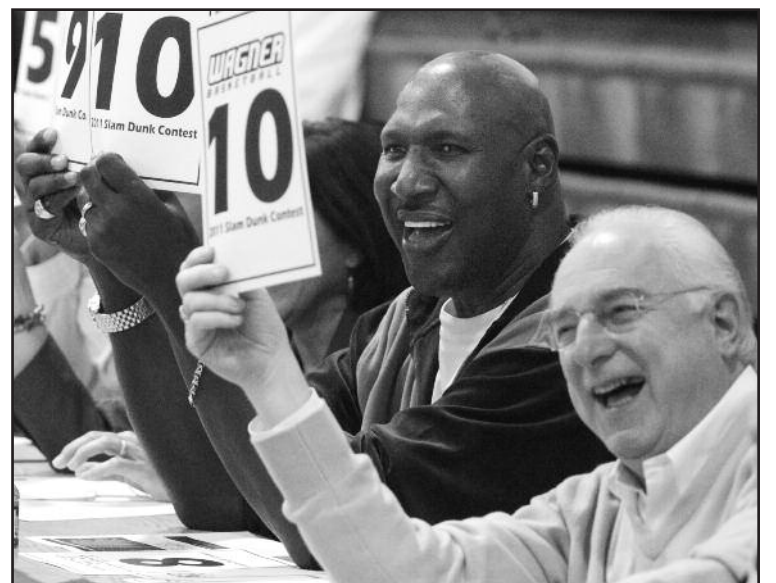


Photo by the Staten Island Advance

The president and ex-NBA star Darryl Dawkins attend "Madness Before Midnight" in October 2011.



Photo by Staten Island Advance

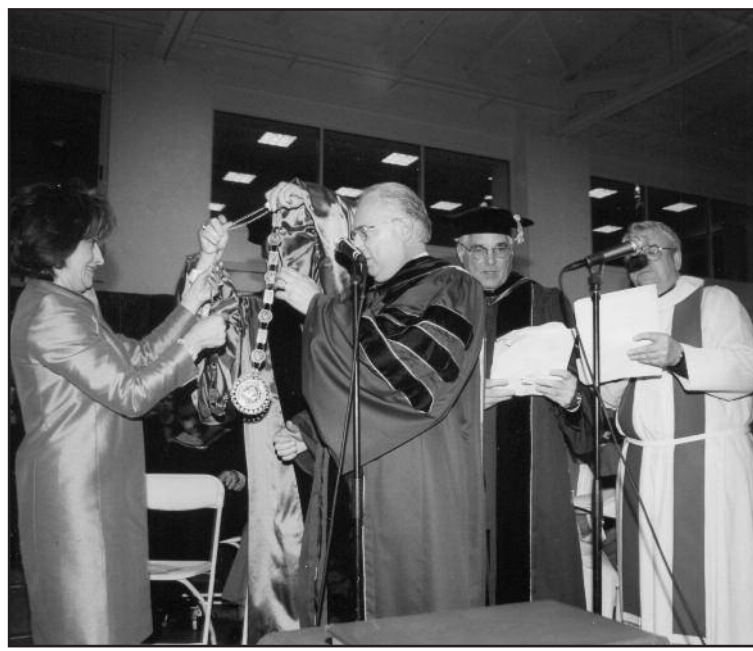
Michael Manzulli receives from President Guarasci the pair of golden scissors that were used during the Foundation Hall ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 19, 2010.



Photo by Bryan Grandison

The Wagnerian staff interviews President Guarasci in his Union office on Sept. 18.





**SPECIAL MOMENT:** Carin Guarasci places the presidential seal around her husband's neck during his 2003 inauguration ceremony as trustee Robert O'Brien and the late chaplain Lyle Guttu participate.



**CALL HIM DR. TRUMP:** The world-famous businessman receives an honorary doctorate in 2004.



**PROUD:** Donald Trump displays his degree after the ceremony.

**FRONT-PAGE NEWS:** The Wagnerian features an article on the college's new president in an April 2002 issue.

# Decade of special moments

## 2002                      2003                      2004                      2005                      2006

The Board of Trustees unanimously elects Richard Guarasci as Wagner's 18th president on April 25. He served as provost and vice president for academic affairs for five years before the appointment.

Richard Guarasci becomes Wagner's president at an inauguration ceremony on April 12 in the Spiro Sports Center. He delivers his inaugural address to a crowd of about 500 people, and is congratulated by many.

Uber-entrepreneur Donald Trump is the keynote speaker at the commencement ceremony on May 21. He receives an honorary doctorate and tells graduates: "Always give 100 percent effort. Be disciplined. Study and learn."

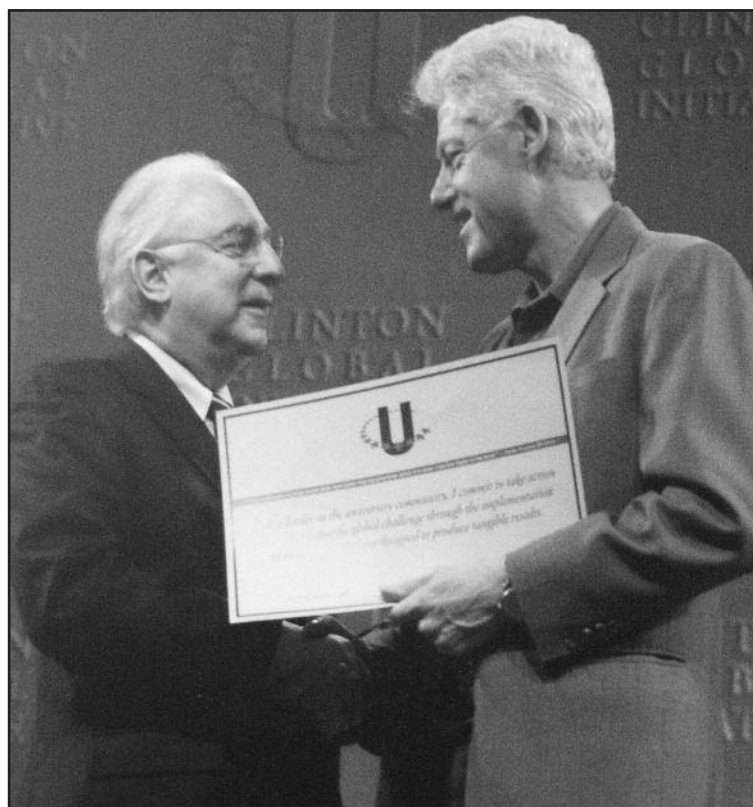
The president accepts the Theodore M. Hesburgh Award on Feb. 14 from the American Council on Education in recognition of the Wagner Plan's First-Year Program.

President Guarasci welcomes former NATO supreme commander and former presidential candidate General Wesley Clark as commencement speaker.



**PROGRESS:** The president leads a groundbreaking ceremony for Foundation Hall in 2008. At right is Staten Island Deputy Borough President Ed Burke '80.

*Photos courtesy of Lee Manchester*



**ACCOLADES:** Former President Clinton recognizes President Guarasci and the Port Richmond Partnership at the Clinton Global Initiatives University program in 2009.



**HISTORIC:** The president, staff and trustees ring the 2010 closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange.



**PRESIDENTIAL:** Bill Clinton with the Guarasci family and Congressman Michael McMahon in 2010.





**BIG APPLE MOMENT:** Mayor Michael Bloomberg receives an honorary doctorate at the 2005 commencement.



**STEADY SUPPORTERS:** The Guarascis join Mike and Margaret Nicolais at Ellis Island in 2007.



**TRIBUTE:** The Lyle Guttu Memorial Garden is dedicated in 2008.



**RALLYING:** The Guarascis speak with Hillary Clinton during a congressional campaign rally in 2008.

# define Guarasci presidency

2007

Project Hospitality recognizes the Guarascis with the Les Trautmann Memorial Award for Outstanding Contribution to the People of Staten Island at the Harvest Home Dinner on Sept. 24. Other honorees are Mayor Bloomberg and Bishop Patrick Ahern.

2008

The president visits Rochester, N.Y., Wagner's historic home, to dedicate a Founders Tree at the house of one of the college's two co-founders and lay a wreath on the grave of George Wagner.

2009

On March 18, the president and community leaders officially sign the Port Richmond Partnership. The program has since expanded to become a unique part of Wagner and its experiential learning program.

2010

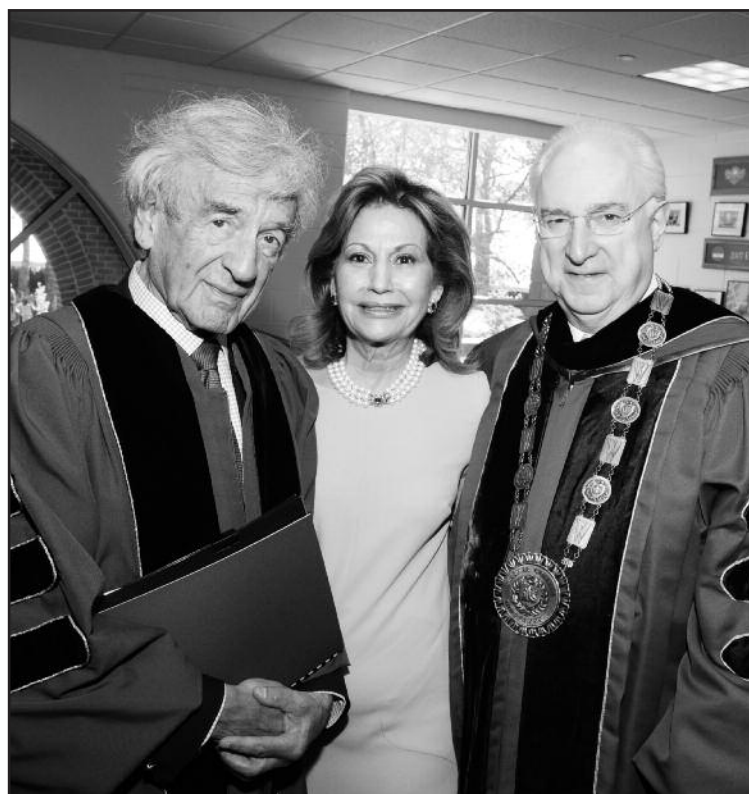
The Guarascis host a reception and presentation on April 22 at their Grymes Hill home for SI350, the year-long commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the European settlement of Staten Island.

2011

The president's op-ed essay, "Aid to College Students Benefits Us All," is published on Aug. 25 in the Albany Times Union, the daily newspaper of New York's state capital.



**GLOBETROTTER:** President Guarasci visits Oslo, Norway, in the summer of 2011 to address a Council of Europe conference on civic engagement and the future of democracy.



**INSPIRATIONAL:** The Guarascis greet 2012 commencement speaker and Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel.



**FOURSOME:** Richard A. Grasso, Donald Crooks, Kenneth Langone and President Guarasci at Langone's speech in 2012.



**SAFE AND SOUND:** The president oversees a campus evacuation as Hurricane Irene strikes in August 2011.

*Reported by Alexandria Greco, Emily Rekstis and Alyssa Ahern*



# STUDENTS EXPRESS THEIR



“Dr. Guarasci is a true asset to Wagner College because he analyzes this institution from all perspectives including students, alumni, faculty, staff, and, most of all, the community. This year is my fourth year being a part of the Student Government Association (SGA), where I have witnessed Dr. Guarasci's consistent support toward student suggestions and concerns. On behalf of SGA, I would like to congratulate Dr. Guarasci for 10 incredible years as president and wish him the best of luck in his future here at Wagner College.”

**Gregory J. Balaes, SGA President**



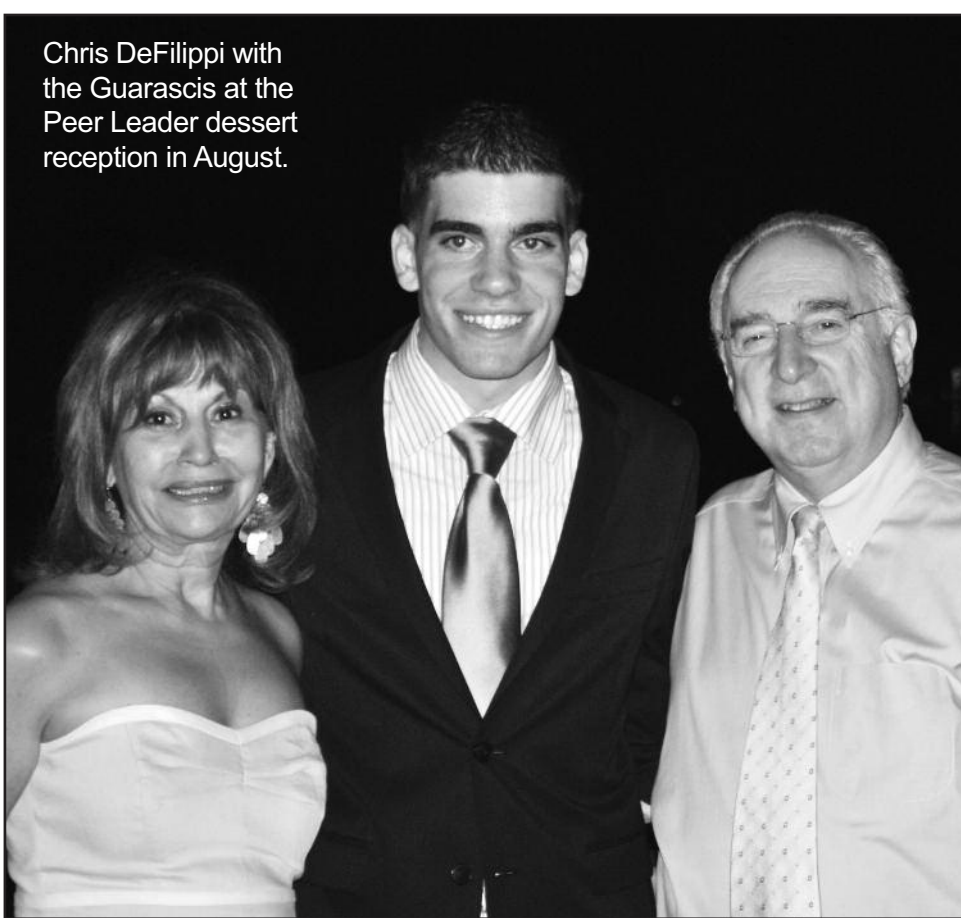
Kevin Ferreira stands on President Guarasci's left during a ceremony at Gracie Mansion in July 2012.

“Dr. Guarasci has a deep commitment to Wagner and the community that can be felt by everyone. He has been an important mentor to me, exemplifying what leader. As someone who is passionate about developing democratic and inclusive spaces, Dr. Guarasci has been an important mentor to me. He is much more than a president, he is a person who is committed to a vision of Wagner, to a vision of education, and to a vision of community that holds promise and opportunity for everyone.”

**Kevin Ferreira, Senior**

“Out of all the institutions I have visited, I have never seen a president who is so involved in campus-life. No matter if I see him while I am walking to class or at an Admissions event, he always takes a moment to say ‘hello,’ discuss classes, and even thank me for what I do for the college. Dr. Guarasci is an asset to this institution. As I continue my years at Wagner, I hope to remain close with Dr. Guarasci. He has inspired me to bring great change to the campus community and he truly encouraged me to go above and beyond. I can't thank him enough for his kindness to me and his dedication to the institution.”

Chris DeFilippi with the Guarascis at the Peer Leader dessert reception in August.



**Chris DeFilippi, SGA Senator**

## THE WAGNERIAN Special Edition

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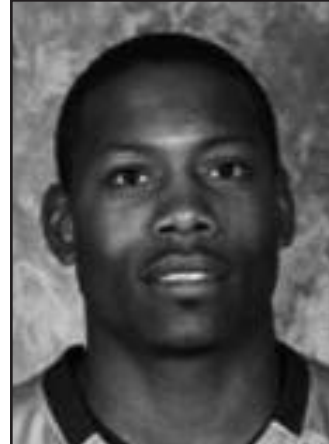
Lee Manchester  
*Director of Media Relations*



# ADMIRATION AND PRAISE

“President Guarasci always says ‘hi’ to me, and he always greets me by name. I had class with him — Darwin, Marx and Freud — and I really enjoyed what he contributed to the course. He’s very personable.”

**Jamie Macchia, Senior**



“President Guarasci has always been a down-to-earth guy. He really takes an interest in what I do here on campus and has always encouraged me to be a leader. I see him and his wife as role models, and if there’s any time I may need something or have a problem, I know I could go to him.”

**Josh Thompson, Grad Student**

“President Guarasci is a great man and a wonderful leader. He always makes me and my family feel at home here at Wagner. His kindness and compassion inspires me to work hard and fills me with so much Wagner pride. These are qualities of a great leader and we are lucky to have one in Dr. Guarasci.”

**Amanda Hastings, Junior**



“President Guarasci has done a lot for Wagner, especially financially. So I have a lot of respect for him. I have friends who go to schools who don’t have the slightest clue who their president is. It is a unique experience being able to talk with him and see him on campus a lot.”

**Neal Fessler, Senior**

“He is very friendly toward everyone. He always remembers me and says ‘hi’ and asks how everything is. He is so supportive of the theater and asks how any shows I’m in are going.”

**Bronwyn Whittle, Junior**



“At the honors reception my freshman year, he and I talked about literature, like Hemingway and Russian writers, for roughly 20 minutes. It was great and made me feel welcome at the college.”

**Zachary Weinstein, Junior**

“He just has a wonderful presence. I know from personal interactions that he is simply a kind person. He is a well spoken and educated man who has heart enough to contribute to small causes on campus.”

**Emily Stein, Class of 2012**



“President Guarasci was my professor for a government class my freshman year. Ever since then, he always makes sure to say ‘hello’ to me whenever he sees me. It’s cool how he always remembers what activities I’m in at Wagner and never fails to ask me how they are going. He makes me feel like I’m not just a number.”

President Guarasci shows how much he genuinely cares about his students and wants to make sure they are happy at Wagner. He really seems to love his job and that positive energy really makes students appreciate and like him even more.”

**Emily Sayre, Junior**

“Both President Guarasci and his wife are very lovely individuals. When I went to their house last year, I felt like I was welcomed with open arms.”

**Jeana Shea, Sophomore**



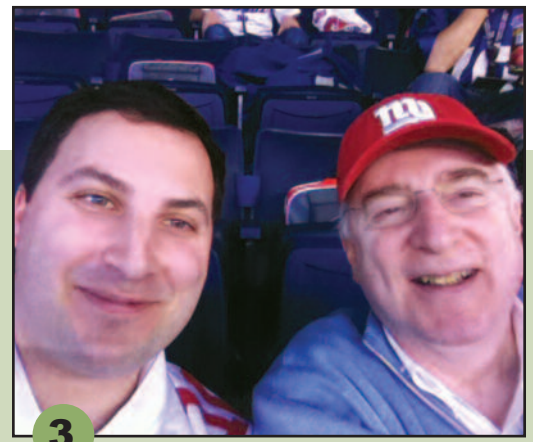




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# Snapshots of a president



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1. The Guarascis join alumnae for "Evita."  
 2. President Guarasci with Karen Luchow at Reunion 2007. 3. The president with his son, Patrick, at Super Bowl 2012. 4. The president at his favorite vacation spot, Cape Cod. 5. Support for the Seahawks at one of the president's favorite events of the year, Homecoming. 6. Carin and Richard Guarasci circa 1964. 7. The Guarascis on a trip to London in March 2012. 8. The president walks his daughter, Bridget, down the aisle at her wedding on May 24, 2011.