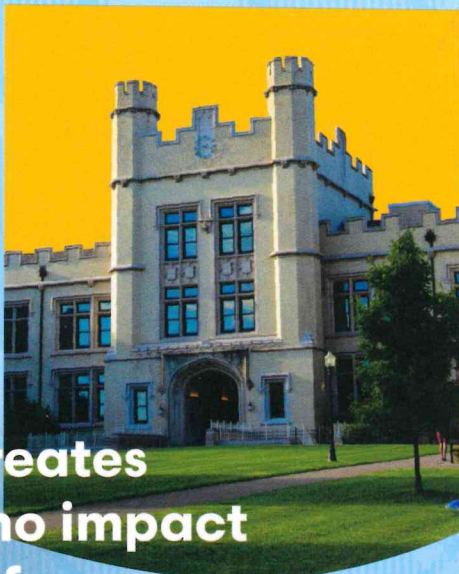
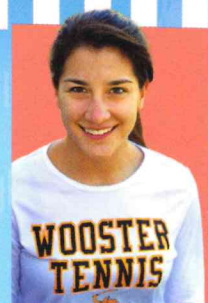
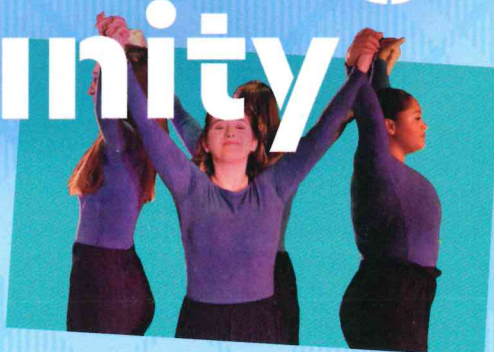


WOOSTER

SPRING 2024

Constructing Community



Campus exploration creates empowered leaders who impact communities near and far

Sociology major and soccer standout kicks through barriers to improve access and equity in education. P. 8

Seeds planted at Wooster propel alumna to support communities around the world. P. 12

Broad thinking supports transformation in workplace and community. P. 14

Big World Connections for Little Explorers

Music alumna builds community as museum president

In her position as president of the Long Island Children's Museum (LICM), Erika (Fischer) Floreska '93 works on a wide range of projects, but The College of Wooster's curriculum prepared her to approach these tasks head on. "In a president's role, you really have a hand in lots of different things, and I think that mirrors the idea of a liberal arts degree," she said.

Floreska approached her college search process intending to find a school that provided a rigorous education, high-level music experience, and that encouraged students to pursue subjects outside of their disciplines—and Wooster fit her interests. While she originally began as a music education major, Floreska quickly discovered through Wooster's experiential learning opportunities that she prefers being informally involved with education, rather than being a teacher in front of a classroom. Completing both Bachelor of Arts in music and Bachelor of Music in flute performance degrees at Wooster fostered her interests for both music and education.

As someone who greatly values connection, Floreska demonstrated her passion for serving her community through her love for Soup and Bread, which remains a weekly, on-campus event run by the Wooster Volunteer Network that donates student attendees' meal swipes to a nonprofit at the end of each semester. An advocate for community engagement, Floreska continues to cultivate her passion in her new role as museum president that she started in June 2023.

→ Floreska enjoys developing personal connections with members of the community through her work at the museum.

Following her graduation from Wooster, Floreska returned to her home state to pursue a Master of Music at the University of Michigan, after which she worked at the University Musical Society as an associate production manager. This position served as an important stepping stone for Floreska's career, providing her with the connections she needed for her role in New York City at Jazz at Lincoln Center. She continued her career working in internationally renowned nonprofits as well as smaller, independent companies, which required her to become adept at different tasks from fundraising to community

engagement. The diversity of tasks is exactly what Floreska says Wooster prepared her for: "I felt very much a spirit of inquiry and questioning that made me really open to some of the different ways the world works, to different people, and to the different ways people approach things. That's why I love having the liberal arts background. It has definitely helped me in my career."

Floreska's responsibilities as president at the museum require her to consistently utilize a variety of fundamental skills, including organization, leadership, and relationship building. Wooster served as an important foundation for her, making critical thinking a vital part of her essential skill set for living in today's "multifaceted world." "A brain that works with liberal arts and the kind of thinking and connectivity that provides—that's what a president needs," Floreska said. She constantly adapts to new challenges or goals to continue the legacy begun by her predecessors of building connections between her community and the museum. The position allows her to develop personal connections with community members that prior positions have not and she thoroughly enjoys giving tours and showing people around the museum.

In essence, LICM's mission is to create an environment for children and caregivers that





fosters wonder, imagination, and exploration, and Floreska wants the museum to serve as a place for connection in a relatively disconnected world. After years of working at both national and international levels, Floreska excitedly switched her focus from international outreach to local community engagement. Living in an area where racial divides are prevalent, Floreska hopes for the museum to serve as a gathering space and an opportunity to build connections across differences. With an emphasis on serving the community, LICM breaks down barriers by providing theater and educational programming that celebrates a wide variety of cultures.

While as president she sets the “vision, values, and priorities” of the museum, Floreska’s role also includes meeting with staff, reviewing budgets, fundraising, and meeting with donors. What fuels her enthusiasm for all her roles is knowing that she sparks joy in the kids who run through the museum’s open doors every morning. She loves seeing them thrive in the imaginative, safe environment that she and her staff have worked so hard to create. ■

ABOVE One of Floreska’s favorite aspects of her role at the museum is time interacting with children and families.

RIGHT Floreska stands outside the Long Island Children’s Museum.



“

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ERIKA (FISCHER) FLORESKA '93