

COLLEGE CONNECTIONS  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

**On the Horizon**

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic left the whole world at a standstill, and the “new normal” revealed the limitations of our old one. At LSA’s College Connections Program, we found it as important as ever to continue collecting alumni and parent feedback—this time, of course, through virtual interviews. As we emerge from this tumultuous year, these insights will play a pivotal role in shaping the college’s future in the face of some of society’s most pressing issues.

# TIMELINE

How does one of the nation's largest public universities respond to a global pandemic? At first, even we did not have an answer. Here is a look at U-M events—both tragedies and triumphs alike—since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

# 2020

## January

First recorded coronavirus case in U.S.

## March

First recorded coronavirus case in Michigan  
U-M temporarily cancels classes  
U-M and Big 10 cancel sports season  
College Connections travel ends abruptly  
State of Michigan issues stay-at-home order  
All university operations made remote

## April

LSA Dean's Office launches COVID-19 email helpline

## May

Bentley Historical Library starts COVID-19 collection

## June

U-M issues on-campus mask mandate for Ann Arbor

## July

U-M expands on-campus mask mandate to all campuses

## August

U-M launches COVID-19 screening tool and data dashboard  
Ann Arbor campus adopts modified grading metrics and flexible withdrawal, launches outdoor study spaces for students

## September

President Schlissel announces weekly COVID testing and updates

## October

Michigan Marching Band announces virtual season  
Washtenaw County issues stay-in-place order

## November

Washtenaw County ends stay-in-place order  
State of Michigan issues emergency order

## December

University announces virtual Winter commencement  
Faculty encouraged to include well-being statement in syllabi  
First COVID-19 vaccine administered in the United States  
Michigan Medicine vaccinates first members; unveils Blue Queue vaccination sign-up

# 2021

## April

U-M begins to roll out COVID-19 vaccine to students

## March

U-M commemorates a year of COVID-19  
Spring grads invited to watch virtual commencement at Big House

## February

University announces virtual Spring commencement  
Michigan Medicine exceeds 50,000 vaccinations

## May

U-M begins to roll out COVID-19 vaccine to children aged 12+

## July

U-M self-reported vaccination statistics indicate 68% of students vaccinated  
(Now at 96% for students and faculty and 87% for staff as of early October)  
U-M requires COVID-19 vaccination on all campuses

## June

Masking requirements reduced for Ann Arbor campus

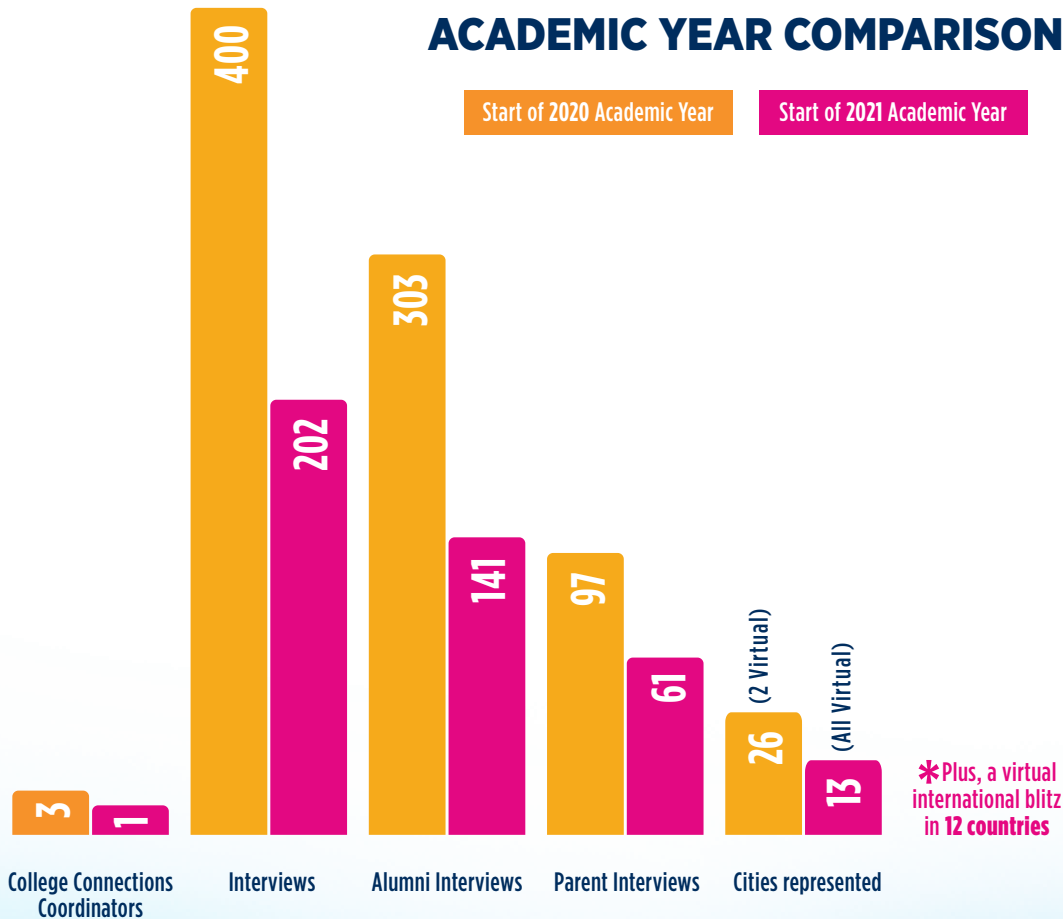
While this simplified timeline gives a glimpse into the state of the university during the pandemic, it is by no means exhaustive. We recognize the countless challenges our society and community have faced and still face—both as a result of the pandemic and beyond—as well as the disparities that amplify them. We at LSA hold sympathy and solidarity for all who have been affected by the events of this year, and are committed to pursuing research and pedagogy that will help us grow into more knowledgeable, ethical, empathetic citizens.



# UNPRECEDENTED

Tremendous change was a hallmark of the pandemic, and College Connections was not exempt. In the unfamiliar and unpredictable climate, we faced new and astounding challenges as a team, a college, and a university.

## ACADEMIC YEAR COMPARISON



### 2021 LSA-COVID-HELP

Helmed by College Connections coordinators, the COVID e-mail helpline connected members of the U-M community to appropriate avenues of support during the pandemic, including resources for academic, financial, and technology aid.

### Operations:

- Young Alumni Councils
- Young Alumni Newsletter
- Data analytics

### Operations:

- COVID Email Helpline
- Young Alumni Councils
- Young Alumni Newsletter



Now—given the pandemic and some national scandals around sexual misconduct—is a crucial time for integrity at U-M. How the university and the college decide to respond to crises of such scale will have a lasting impression on their reputation. There is no room for any integrity to be sacrificed.”—Patience J. (A.B. 1997)

# OLD NORMAL

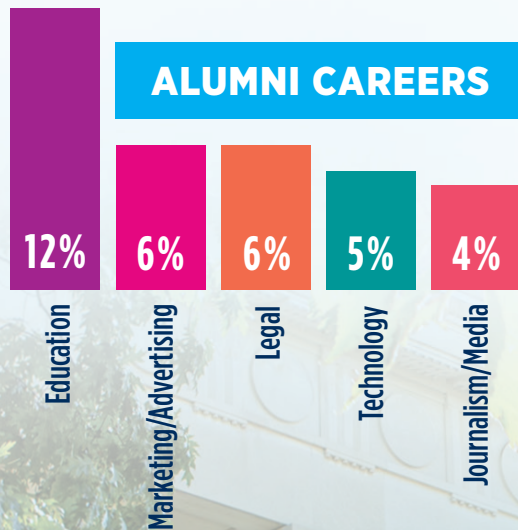
Amid the tumult of a changing world, our College Connections interviews fortunately remained, at their core, the same. Just as in a traditional year, then, we can provide a breakdown of the experiences of our interviewees, both past and present.



Choosing to be well-rounded carries a lot of stigma—it can seem wishy-washy or undecided. But if I chose to do a B.B.A., I would’ve missed out on all of the other stuff that I learned in LSA. As a marketer, I would shout from the rooftops about all that makes LSA unique.” —Laura G. (A.B. 2001)

TOP MAJORS		EXTRACURRICULARS		
STUDENTS	Economics	20%	Greek Life	51%
	Psychology	11%	Internships	20%
	Computer Science	10%	Volunteering	16%
	Communications and Media	7%	Campus Athletics/Events	13%
	Undeclared	15%	Study Abroad	13%

(Participants could select more than one option / from parent data)



TOP MAJORS		EXTRACURRICULARS		
ALUMNI	English	10%	Greek Life	26%
	Political Science	9%	Michigan Daily	11%
	History	5%	Work	7%
	Psychology	5%	Internships	6%
	Mathematics	4%	Performing Group	6%

(Participants could select more than one option)

# “NEW NORMAL”

In the new normal, the university community had to adapt to new ways of learning and living. Our program’s format presented an opportunity to hear from the latest LSA graduates—the “pandemic generation”—about their recent time at the university.



A lot of graduate schools closed or changed their application cycles, so it was a weird time to be applying” (B.S. 2020)

“Starting a full-time job in the pandemic was an adjustment, but I’m doing okay now” (A.B. 2019)

“Learning remotely feels much harder than working remotely” (A.B. 2019)

“I learned the hard way that I had to prioritize self-care, but my professors in LSA were really kind and understanding about mental health . . . I feel grateful about the route I chose” (A.B. 2020)

“LSA has the tools for student support, but they could be made more accessible . . . I worry about students who may not have family or friends to mentor them” (A.B. 2019)

“Be your own advocate—people do want to help you, but they don’t always know if you need help. Put yourself out there first” (B.S. 2020)

“I hope I’ll get the chance to walk at graduation soon” (A.B. 2020)

## NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS BY GRAD YEAR



# ON THE CLOCK

One of the largest lessons of COVID-19 seems to be that, as much as we might miss them, we may never go back to our old ways... and in some ways, we shouldn't. At College Connections, it's our role to see what people are hoping to carry forward, and what to leave behind. In that sense, we're on the clock.



We have to help students learn to talk to people they disagree with. We're led to think that people who disagree with us disagree with our end goals or don't want to make the world a better place, but that's not usually the case—the debate is usually about how we ought to do that.” —Steve H. (A.B. 1985)

“How do we make technology serve us instead of own us?”

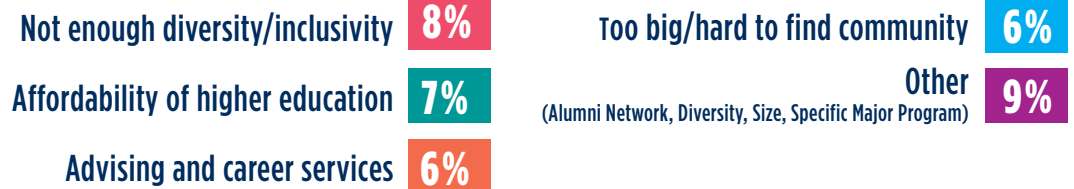
—Julie J. (A.B. 1987)

“We have to have students enjoy their time [at the university] so that they're not purely studying their tail off and accelerating themselves out of happiness.”

—Todd M. (A.B. 1991)

“There are deep social divides in our country that need healing. LSA can help the country find its new identity in the midst of turmoil.” —Matt C. (A.B. 1992)

## ALUMNI CONCERNS



## PARENT CONCERNS



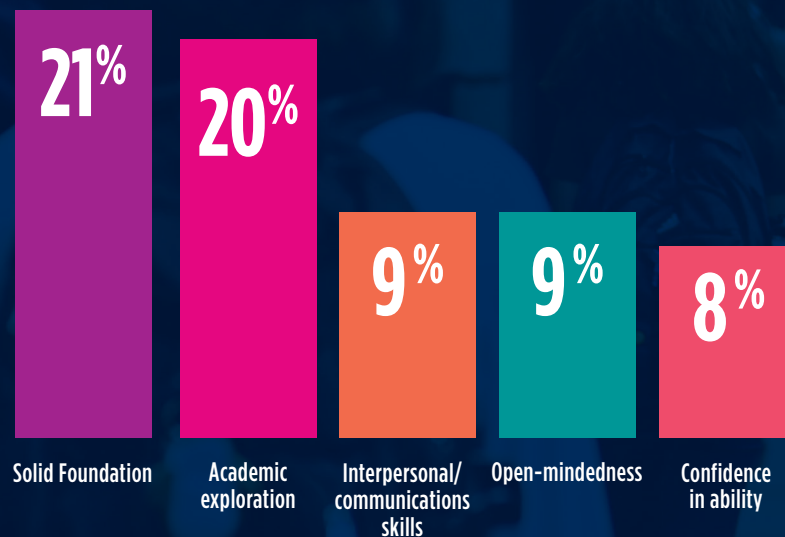
(Participants could mention more than one option)



# ON THE HORIZON

The feedback we collect through College Connections interviews is later reported to the LSA dean. Under the current leadership of Dean Anne Curzan, we look for how the college's values of **Exploration, Inclusion, Well-being, Integrity**, and **Common Good** are reflected in the experiences of our students and alumni. Over a year since the start of the pandemic, we see this moment in time as an opportunity: In the face of some of the world's most pressing problems, we hope to equip and empower the LSA community to take charge.

## IMPACT OF AN LSA EDUCATION (FROM ALUMNI)



*(Participants could mention more than one option)*

“ Things are less homogenous in LSA than in other schools, which helps [because] you're statistically more likely to meet someone different. I learned so much from the diversity of my peers, including how to navigate the world while considering different, deeper backgrounds and points of view.”

—Evan G. (A.B. 2016)

“ LSA students keep a bigger perspective and gives them a charge, as if to say, 'You can play a role in these big problems.' It also provides students with the tools they need to apply well-reasoned and fair solutions to these problems.”

—Andy F. (B.S. 2011)

# FACING THE FUTURE

Like many others, we're lucky to be able to say we slowly but surely found our footing. Our newest College Connections Coordinators are not only tasked with facing the future alongside LSA, but are also the faces of the future for our program. We hope you'll get the chance to connect or work with them soon!



## Paige Apsey

Paige is a 2021 LSA graduate with an A.B. in Psychology and a minor in Global Media Studies. She grew up in Belleville, Michigan, and Saginaw, Michigan, and her grandfather always said she "had maize and blue in her" from the time she was born. During her time at U-M, Paige worked as external relations chair for the university's Panhellenic Association, conducted research for the Department of Psychiatry, fundraised for breast cancer research with Zeta Tau Alpha and Relay for Life, and volunteered with organizations like the Wolverine Support Network and Project Outreach. She joined LSA Advancement in 2019 as a digital fundraising assistant, and started her role in College Connections in 2021. As a coordinator, Paige will conduct interviews primarily on the East Coast and help to revolutionize the team's data processes.

**“** Coming out of the pandemic, I can see the university increasing its priorities toward staff, faculty, and students' mental health, specifically focusing on inclusion, and how each individual's needs may be different than others'. We can only be the Leaders & Best if we're feeling our best!" —Paige



## MaryRose Clark

MaryRose is a 2020 LSA graduate with an A.B. in Communication and Media Studies and dual minors in Entrepreneurship and Law, Justice, and Social Change. She was raised in the small village of Dryden in the 'thumb' of Michigan, and was a HAIL Scholarship recipient, as well as part of LSA's Comprehensive Studies Program. At U-M, she was involved with Alternative Spring Break Program, the Development Summer Internship Program, Pets Are Wonderful Support (PAWS) of Ann Arbor and additional local animal non-profits, as well as study abroad programs in France, Italy, and Vietnam with the Center for Global and Intercultural Study (CGIS). She also worked for almost three years as a student manager at Bert's Cafe in the Shapiro Undergraduate Library. As a College Connections Coordinator, MaryRose will conduct interviews primarily on the West Coast and lead the work of LSA's Young Alumni Council.

**“** I envision a well-thought-out approach to how the university, and LSA in particular, can learn and evolve from the pandemic. This past year highlighted some key areas of improvement, and I think that under Dean Anne Curzan's leadership and guidance, we will see huge strides for bettering the student experience for all." —MaryRose



I see LSA and its leaders as a powerhouse of intellectual and humanistic rigor, and a producer of great thinkers and humans. I have the utmost faith that we can continue to grow respectful, responsible, and caring human beings who will help make the world a better place. In many ways, that's my goal, too!" —Kai

Kai is a 2019 LSA graduate with an A.B. in English. Since childhood, she has split her time between Southeast Michigan and south central Japan. As a transfer student, Kai began her Michigan tenure in the Global Scholars Program, where she worked as a dialogue facilitator and resident advisor (RA), and was also involved with U-M Slam Poetry and LSA's Opportunity Hub and optiMize program. After more than two years with College Connections, where she worked as the communications chair to compile the weekly Young Alumni Newsletter and the Annual Report, she will be moving to Tokyo to be closer to family and friends and to pursue her dream of writing in a creative career field. She is endlessly grateful to College Connections, and especially the terrific alumni and parents she had the pleasure of meeting along the way, for helping her decide on this next step in her life, and is excited to be able to continue her work with the Young Alumni Newsletter as a freelance writer.



**Kai Mason**





# STAY CONNECTED TO LSA

- Mentor an LSA student
- Provide an internship or career opportunity
- Connect with the LSA Opportunity Hub
- Join the LSA Young Alumni Council
- Join the LSA Young Alumni Newsletter
- Give to the LSA Annual Fund
- Leave a legacy gift

*To get involved, connect, or share more feedback, contact us at*

[collegeconnectionsprogram@umich.edu](mailto:collegeconnectionsprogram@umich.edu)

**Thank you.** We appreciate your time, feedback, and commitment to LSA. We are grateful for your participation in the College Connections program.