

rc news

how our garden grows



nurture

Man by Nature Desires to Know - Aristotle

BY VIRGINIA MURPHY

The Residential College emerged in 1967 in a time and a world dramatically different and remarkably similar to our own.

Fifty years ago the environmental movement brought together a Nation torn apart by civil rights activism, the Vietnam War, and women's liberation around the common goal of ending pollution and protecting threatened species. Through a series of groundbreaking laws passed during the 1970s and 1980s, those challenges were met, only to yield to a new and profound set of challenges that call into question how future generations will survive on the earth.

Today's students recognize that they must find a way to live in harmony with an ecosystem that is in jeopardy. The immediate challenge is climate change, which threatens to make the world uninhabitable by the next century; the broader context is sustainability. New and innovative approaches to

energy and water use, as well as ways to mitigate the planet's rising temperatures, are being explored across all academic disciplines.

Fifty years ago the anti-war movement joined students from across the country in large-scale demonstrations against the Vietnam War and the chemical warfare waged against the Vietnamese people. At the same time, race riots consumed Tampa, Buffalo, Newark, Milwaukee, and forever changed the city of Detroit. Human Be-Ins began in San

Francisco, moved across the country, and preceded the "Summer of Love" in spreading a message of tolerance, acceptance, and peace.

Today's students advocate across campuses

and the country to end American involvement in regional conflicts in North Africa and the Middle East even as they promote the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States and equal rights for the lesbian, gay, and transgender communities. They seek greater tolerance toward religious minorities, awareness of the intergenerational trauma of systemic racism, and an end to the pain of xenophobia and hatred in all of its forms.

Fifty years ago the Residential College "sought to create a liberal arts program that united the virtues of smallness with the resources of the large research university." Indicative of the social dynamic of the time, faculty, administrators, and students shared responsibility for the curriculum, which was "designed to foster freedom and flexibility within a carefully structured liberal arts framework."

"The Core Curriculum strove . . . to introduce students to the academic fields central to a contemporary university

The Residential College has long been a greenhouse for inquiry and teaching; the physical garden offers an extension of those principles through an experiential agrarian model.



PHOTO BY JOHN KNOX

The Residential College (RC) is a four-year, interdisciplinary, living-learning community of 1,000 undergraduates established through the University of Michigan's College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LSA) in 1967. The distinctive educational mission of the RC is to enable students to develop their intellectual interests and creative talents in an environment in which they can find their own voice and relate learning with doing. The RC faculty and staff challenge students to take the initiative in shaping their own education, to participate actively in classes and in extra-curricular programs, to think critically about what they are learning and reflectively about what they are doing, and to engage with the University community as well as the outside world. Learn more at: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/rc>.

education, but also to situate these fields within an historical and philosophical context of some depth.” The college further advanced the learning environment through a personalization of the curriculum; “[a]t the end of their sophomore year, students were to take a comprehensive examination on the core, before proceeding to entirely independent and individualized concentrations in their upper-level program.”

Today, the Residential College still pursues the ideals of a liberal arts education within a living-learning community that endorses students’ academic curiosity in addition to evincing a fundamental concern for their wellbeing. Within the Residential College’s structured and systematic method of education, students experiment with diverse learning modalities, each designed with a democratic civic purpose representative of John Dewey’s vision of “hospitality of mind, generous imagination, trained capacity of discrimination, freedom from class, sectarian or partisan prejudice and passion, faith without fanaticism.”

The Residential College’s passion for cultivating humane values in our students extends beyond the classroom experiences of intellectual and artistic engagement and collaboration. Last fall, the Residential College broke ground on the East Quad Garden, two years after moving into newly renovated buildings that house our classrooms and dormitories. The Residential College has long been a greenhouse for inquiry and teaching; the physical garden offers an extension of those principles through an experiential agrarian model.

Through a collaborative, multi-year process, students, faculty, and staff from across the campus planned the garden’s design and implementation. In an attempt to address the abundant ecological issues we face, the garden provides a habitat to protect the biodiversity of native pollinators. Through both academic research and networking with area gardeners, we designed and built a pollinator box to encourage nesting sites, as well as seeding an adjacent hillside with plants native to the area. Like our students and their collaborative pursuits, the pollinator box and native plant species work in concert with one another, bringing pollinators to the garden to pollinate our crops while simultaneously offering pollen for them to take to other gardens to ensure healthy biodiversity.

The garden has grown two student forums with over forty students invested in the processes of the garden. One initiative, designed to take root next spring, is the planting of native grass species to test drought tolerance. As the planet warms, we must look for better ways to mitigate water loss. An entire area of the garden has been dedicated to this type of hands-on experiential learning. The forums also participated in last fall’s harvest, the spring planting of seedlings, and a cooking demonstration on healthy eating. The crops of



kale, spinach, and chard that were not used in the students’ demonstration were distributed to an area food pantry, thus allowing the students to cultivate their own place within the larger community.

As the Residential College has evolved over the last fifty years, so too has the discussion of a liberal education and pedagogical practices. What persists is the importance of a multicultural curriculumone that transcends Western philosophy and which encourages enquiry into non-Western culture, as well as race and gender studies: a seedling if you will, of the philosophical tradition, vigorously tended by the Residential College’s intellectual expansiveness.

The East Quad Garden, in the tradition of the Residential College, has embraced a multidisciplinary approach to what crops are planted each spring, what classes we will teach in the garden, and how garden events are communicated to the community. This summer the garden’s stock tanks hold basil, rainbow chard, tomatoes and corn. The chives from last year’s bounty greeted us again this year, as did our most resilient crop— mint. The student garden intern this spring has planted a tea garden, which will be shared in the fall during the afternoon teas held by the language instructors to facilitate fluency among students.

We’ve also collaborated with instructors in the fiber arts. Several forum students have begun to study what plants are best for fabric dyeing. The Residential College printmaking studio, too, has participated by holding a contest each of the garden’s two years in order to choose a student design for the banners that hang above the garden walkway. In this way, we promote an inclusive approach that welcomes the diverse perspectives, pedagogy, and artistic vision that identify us as the Residential College.

The Residential College "supports campus-based initiatives that demonstrate how uses of engaged forms of learning that actively involve students both within and beyond

the classroom directly contribute to their cognitive, emotional, and civic development." Our ideas and programs have recently been lauded in the Provost's report, "A New Vision for University of Michigan Academic Programs in Sustainability, Environment, and Society," which advocated for more experiential learning opportunities like those offered by the Residential College.

As I watch the students turn the earth and gently nudge the seedlings from their protective wrappings, I am reminded that the garden serves as a powerful metaphor for the work we do in the Residential College. What was once an underdeveloped courtyard has now become a productive pedagogical tool. Not only will the land produce a bounty of herbs and vegetables, it will prove (or disprove) theoretical models of drought resistance, the resilience of native species, and the paramount importance of protecting pollinators in this time of climate change.

The East Quad Garden also serves as the physical embodiment of the ideals of the experiment that is the Residential

College and the students we produce. Through a liberal education, one grounded in a core philosophical context, this experiential, student-driven plot of land consistently produces engaged, inquisitive young adults each spring: a bumper crop every time.

Each fall, students arrive from across Michigan and the rest of the country. They bring their hopes, passion, and ideas. We lay out the plot lines, measure the distance from course to course, and calculate the rate of growth. Together we bring theory to practice, offer engaged learning, and value civic purpose.

While the seeding and nurturing of minds begins in the Residential College, it is our graduates who, for fifty years, have planted roots in the communities to which they disperse, which identify them as citizens in our republic. ■

VIRGINIA MURPHY teaches in the RC Social Theory and Practice Program.

Meet Miaisha Peoples

The RC welcomes Miaisha Peoples as she joins our staff as Senior Student Services Assistant in RC Academic Services. Miaisha will assist with planning diversity initiatives inside of the RC, help students register for courses, schedule rooms, and work on building access needs.

In Winter 2016, Miaisha and her colleague Logan Corey presented "Non-Traditional Definitions of First Generation Students" at the "Are you first? Promoting First Generation Student Success" Symposium.

Miaisha is a firm believer in ensuring that everyone is taken into account and that programming reflects the student body and their individual voices and needs. Since her time in the RC, Miaisha has initiated several group conversations on how to ensure that all students are given a voice. She has interfaced with the RC Student Diversity Coordinator in planning a student problem-solving meeting. Thanks to the efforts of Miaisha and others, the RC is making strides in creating a more sensitive and responsive support system for all RC students.

Miaisha is a Flint, Michigan native and a graduate of Eastern Michigan University, where she earned a Bachelor Degree in Public Relations (with double majors in Theater Arts and Business) and a Masters in Communications.



While at EMU, Miaisha became a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc through Xi Chapter. Miaisha also was a member of Phi Sigma Pi National Honor Fraternity, serving as the Public Relations Chair and head of the costume/makeup crew head on several theater productions. Prior to her position with the Residential College, Miaisha held the role of Student Services Administrator Associate within the U-M Department of Psychology.

When Miaisha isn't at work she enjoys the company of her best friend and fiance Darian, with whom she explores new cities and restaurants quite often. Darian and Miaisha are currently making plans for their wedding in September of 2016. Miaisha loves spending time with friends and family, playing billiards, vlogging, blogging, cooking, makeup and arts and crafts as well. A self-proclaimed extrovert, Miaisha loves meeting new people and carries a sincere passion for working with students.

We are very happy to welcome Miaisha to the Residential College family.

MIAISHA PEOPLES is Senior Student Services Assistant in RC Academic Services.

ground

BY CHARLIE MURPHY

Good dirt. Gardeners know that with it, all things are possible, and without it, everything's a struggle. In the right dirt, plants can withstand the challenges of heat and drought, freeze and flood. In good dirt, plants thrive; in poor soil, they fight to survive. For almost 50 years, the RC has been the fertile soil in which students grow in ways both beautiful and unexpected.

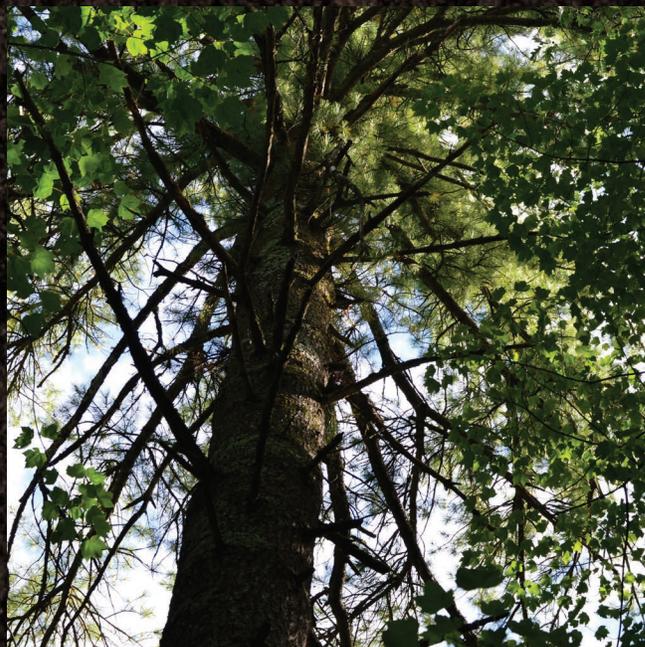
Rooted in the belief that students must actively shape their own education, the RC's intensive language programs and First-Year Seminars grow the skills students need to take advantage of the incredible opportunities that Michigan offers. The RC's intensive language programs provide a supportive and rigorous environment in which to master the semi-immersion format allows students to learn a language quickly and deeply as they develop the discipline and study habits which will enhance all their future studies. Close reading of texts, thoughtful discussion and an emphasis on clear, forceful writing define the RC's First-Year Seminar program, challenging students to engage deeply not only with ideas, but with their peers and instructors as well. Taken together, these two programs prepare RC students to make the most of their Michigan education.

What do students do with the skills they've mastered through the RC? They excel in majors throughout LSA. 91 students graduated for the RC in April 2016 with 36 different majors ranging from History of Art to Neuroscience. 25% of all LSA students graduated with a GPA of 3.685 or above; almost 42% of RC students did. 22% of our graduating class completed an Honors thesis (almost double the overall LSA number) in ten different disciplines. 16% of this graduating class completed the 60 credits of approved math and science coursework to earn a Bachelor of Science degree. No matter the field of endeavor, RC students stand out in the best way. In addition to their explorations far afield, upper-level

RC students continue to enrich our community both in and out of the classroom. Whether as forum leaders, teaching interns, classmates or participants in groups such as the RC Review and RC Players, upper-level RC students play a vital role in the growth and continuity of our community.

Our graduates close the circle, taking life-long friendships and hard-won knowledge into the world while continuing to stay involved with the college. Like any well-tended garden, the RC grows and changes over time, highlighting different aspects of this rich, complex experience. What remains constant? The curiosity and intellectual challenge; the mutual respect we hold for each other, and the knowledge that as individuals and a community, we can make a difference in the world. That's what springs from the good dirt of the RC. ■

CHARLIE MURPHY is Director of RC Academic Services.



seeds

BY LOGAN COREY, RC '13

The first time you grow something, it's magic. That second-grade feeling — watching your lima bean nervously sprout from a paper cup with a few scoops of dirt lined up on the classroom windowsill. It's then you really make the connection that things shoved into soil turn into new things. This might initially lead to failed experiments of planted tennis balls and misplaced sneakers, but then, you start to notice the things that do grow — you start to understand.

The RC is no stranger to the soil. That is to say, the RC knows what it means to truly dedicate and focus on becoming the nurturing grounds from which all new RC life can plant and grow. Here's the thing—soil isn't great just because it's there, it's great because it's the right fit for the right growing, it can support the needs of the seeds and hold its own in the environment it inhabits. The RC knows this, and a huge piece of adapting has been staying in tune to the current needs of the current students.

Here's where I come in. The Student Affairs Coordinator is still a relatively new role in the RC. However, its very existence shows a realm open to evolution. The SAC exists to evaluate and address the needs of the RC student body. RC students are (in case you haven't heard this one before) unique. They learn languages intensively, they thrive in self-motivated academic environments, and they are immensely creative. The SAC meets with students individually, student leaders, and student groups (such as RC Forums) to help turn plans into action. In addition, the SAC acts as a liaison between the students, RC faculty, and fellow RC staff members. In this way, the SAC acts as a unifying thread among the separate groups of the RC community.

The relationship between the RC student and the SAC starts well before day one. In collaboration with The RC Admissions Coordinator, the SAC assists with recruitment of



prospective students through U-M Campus Days and one-on-one visits with students and families. It has been a particular interest of mine to “take the RC to the student” and we have increased the RC's presence in high school recruitment fairs in under-resourced areas. This focus works in harmony with the RC's new initiatives for diversity outreach and support in the creation of the Mentorship Coordinator position.

In many ways, the SAC helps to ensure the needs of the RC student body have a voice. This support can take many forms, from leadership conferences to community wide anchor events to Resident Advisors selection to the RC MAP (Mentorship Among Peers) program. Nestled in the heart of it all, there's a strong drive to infuse the RC soil with even more nutrients, even more potential to help RC seeds grow a little stronger and a little bolder. And every time, I promise you every time, it still has that feeling of lima bean magic. ■

LOGAN COREY *majored in RC Creative Writing and Literature and is RC Admissions & Recruitment Coordinator.*



special section

GROWTH & TRANSFORMATION

AFTER THE RC

The RC is one intentional stop on a larger journey, the threshold moment of change. The RC sets the stage for growth – in our students, within our community, and beyond, which is in the inclusive, home-grown nature of the RC. Call it growing up, growing into yourself, growing into who you are, perhaps even growing past something you don't need anymore. Whatever you call it, RC community support is key.

The RC is everywhere. We know this because students join non-profits in D.C., only to realize their desk mate is a RC alumnus. RC-ers backpack through Europe and bump into former *Deutsches Theater* actors in the local pub.

As the RC community spreads around the globe, RC-ers are recognizable in their drive and their passion to foster a greater society for positive change. The liberal arts education tools they wield are not one-size-fits-all, or a product of planned obsolescence. Rather, they are “some assembly required” with a multitude of personalized add-ons, some more challenging than others: secondary (and tertiary) language skills, for example. RC students earn every gizmo, apparatus, and mechanism they take with them into the world. What sets an RC-er apart from the rest – in an interview, in a competition, in the workforce, is the means and unique skill set to grow a liberal arts environment wherever they may land.



after the rainforest

DOUGLAS HULST, RC '94

It was the summer of 1990.

Madonna's Blond Ambition tour was making headlines and the summer box office was plundered by *Dick Tracy*, *Days of Thunder* and *Total Recall*. George Michael was about to become a "serious" artist. The promise of a new decade—one away from the perceived greed and excess of the 80s—was well underway. The 90s were new and that newness was wonderfully timed to coincide with entering the University of Michigan and the Residential College.

I got lucky. REALLY lucky.

I had not even applied to be a part of the RC. But, fate would have that end up differently. That summer, I was travelling to Australia with Youth For Understanding as an exchange student. Just prior to that trip, a good friend from high school, who had just finished her first year in the RC, called me up and invited me to apply to be a part of the program when I came for Fall orientation.

When I got back from Australia I was so happy to be home that for 2 weeks I contemplated transferring to Hope College near where I was raised. One would think that moving to Ann Arbor would be no big deal after travelling to the other side

of the planet. But... it was. I almost passed on the University of Michigan. Unthinkable, now.

There really are no words I can write to accurately convey the gratitude I feel for not passing on what was to become the most transformational experience of my life. Yep. You read that correctly: The most transformational experience of my life. That's what Ann Arbor was to me. That's what The University of Michigan was to me. That's what—most importantly—the RC and East Quad community were and are to me.

I worked hard for 13 years in my public education to become a University of Michigan student. The home I was raised in and my family facilitated all of this, too. It was an honor to gain admittance into the "Ivy League" of the Big 10. Still, I had no idea how profoundly the RC community would impact me for the rest of my life.

I could go on and on sharing memory after memory. I won't do that except to say that when I am in need of a lift, often times as I fall asleep in the evening, I just pick an RC, East Quad memory and focus on it until sleep comes. Next morning I'm typically feeling much better—awesome, even—than the night prior.

The RC, East Quad community was an incredible place within the larger structure of the enormous university. A school within a school. A community within a community. I got the best of both worlds: An intense small college experience and all the resources and dynamics of a massive and world class university. For me none of it was planned or orchestrated... it just played out that way.

Coming from a small town on the West side of the state of Michigan, Ann Arbor was like another galaxy. There could not have been a more perfect place for me to come to terms with my sexual orientation and come out of the closet. It's been 25 years. After 8 months and my first year in the RC I used the summer of 1991 to process all I'd learned and experienced. By August of that summer I simply knew—inside—that I needed to start telling people about my sexual orientation once back for Fall Term '91. That term, and winter term 1992,



those 8 months of my second year in the RC were—frankly—the best and most transformative of my life. At first read that may sound sad. I assure you... it is not.

It's the truth, my truth. My second year at UM/RC was the most incredible year of my life and I carry that with me each moment of each day. It brings me laughter, solace, comfort and strength when needed. The Quad, the classes, the professors, the discussions, daily life and the friends... these are all with me to tap into whenever the spirit moves. Those 8 months of that second year. Wow. What a gift. What a resource and what a privilege to possess. Thank you Mom

As the mother of my dear friend said to him: You never get over leaving your college town. I never did and that's okay.

and Dad for that gift. Thank you Zeeland Public Schools for the preparation. Thank you faculty and staff of UM/RC and thank you—friends—for sharing with me.

As it is for many, leaving Ann Arbor and the university was incredibly challenging for me. As the mother of my dear friend said to him: You never get over leaving your college town. I never did and that's okay.

It's true. I've never gotten over leaving Ann Arbor and the RC but I've made the conscious choice to focus on the positive in life so that small pain also yields peace and—even—power. When I doubt myself I pull from that time to lift me up higher and stand a bit taller. Yes... I screw up all the time. We all do. That's life. That's human. But, I'm going to focus on the positive and choose positive thinking as much as possible. Life transcends into something more when you do. And, I'll let you ponder and interpret what I mean by that.

My career has not been as I anticipated: 5 years taking kids to the Amazon and Andes of Peru. 5 years planning custom adventures to Costa Rica. 8 years hosting experiences for office furniture design titan Herman Miller, in their Chicago location.

Then? Dependency on alcohol forced me to lose my job—which I loved—and the life I'd worked 15 years creating, in Chicago. I took a year off. I focused on health and wellness. Therapy and yoga, family, friends and fellowship with anyone who would listen to my story and share theirs as well. How did it happen? Genes. Sociological reasons. But, most importantly, I've recently discovered: I did not face a couple of key issues in my life. I drank, instead. I drank so much on the weekends that I needed to drink each weekday evening. A vicious cycle ensued. Humans are wired to explore

substances. Substances are not bad. But...substances can destroy when discipline is not keenly applied to their use. I know, first hand. And—surprisingly—I'm grateful to know and would not go back in time and alter my journey if I had that ability. Nope. Not a chance. I am the man I am, today, because of each step on that journey. Recovery is a lifestyle and can follow Substance Use Disorder, an unhealthy relationship or any unhealthy behavior such as eating, shopping, gambling, sex, porn, etc.

I'm grateful for my Lifestyle of Recovery, there is no doubt.

Now? The journey after the RC, after rainforests and canopy ziplines and ergonomic office chairs, shifts in yet another unplanned and amazing direction. I took a class in Substance Use Disorder treatment and aftercare support. There are these small organizations popping up all around the country called RCOs: Recovery Community Organizations. Their message is simple: Helping those struggling with substance and/or behaviors to have a better quality of life through complete abstinence or careful moderation management. With the national spotlight on the Opioid epidemic the time is right for a new movement to grow and thrive. Opioids are just one piece of the puzzle.

We need an entire paradigm shift in North America. We need a Better Drinking Culture (Google that!) and more education and awareness about all substance/behavior issues along with an overall better understanding of mental health and wellness. We have all heard the phrase "mind and body." Guess what? There's no distinction. It is all one and the same.

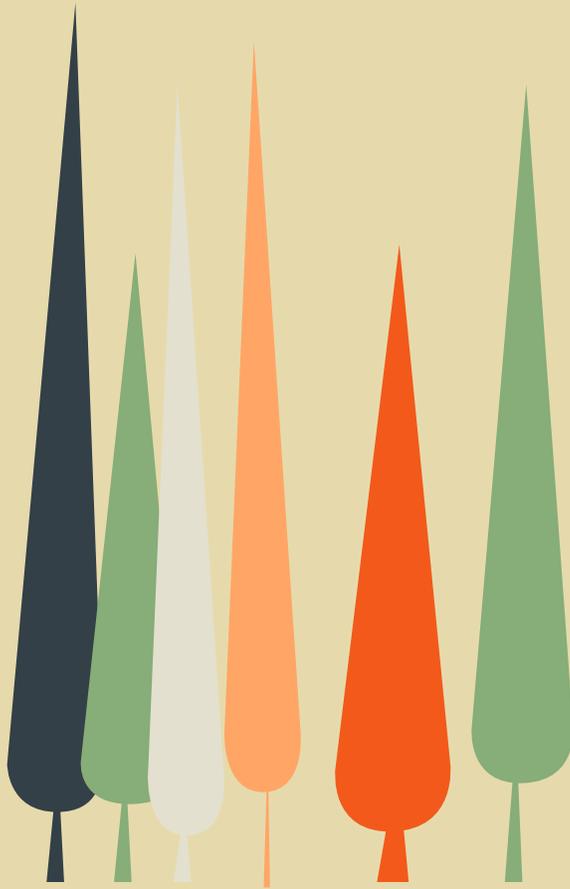
I've never been happier nor healthier in my adult life. I have the smallest amount of possessions and clothes I've ever owned and could not feel more free. My journey continues to unfold in ways I never could have imagined. I practice gratitude and focus on the positive, each day.

More than anything else, my family upbringing and time in Ann Arbor at The University of Michigan Residential College in East Quadrangle, prepared me for the journey of my adulthood. It's hard to put strong emotions into written words. It's a challenge to write about humility and empowerment and how these things collide. It's tough to share that vodka and wine caused me to lose a job I loved and a life I'd worked for more than a decade to build.

But... there is always wisdom and strength to be found in adversity. We simply must make the difficult and deliberate choice to uncover it and grow forward.

Thank you UM/RC for laying a foundation deep within me to make that choice far easier. Even when the tuition payments cease, the learning never does. ■

DOUGLAS HULST majored in RC Arts and Ideas in the Humanities.



planting poems & possibilities

BY ROBIN LILY GOLDBERG, RC '10

When I visited the Residential College as a prospective student, I began breathing freely. Although this seemed like an abstract reason to select a school, the sensation was compelling enough to follow. For this intuitive path, I feel deeply grateful. At my freshman orientation, I had no sense of which major or profession to pursue.

All I knew was that I wanted to immerse myself in Spanish and enroll in a first-year writing seminar entitled “Seeding the Future: Children’s Literature and the Arts of Citizenship.” Initially this course called to me as an opportunity to revisit favorite fairy tales and beloved classics like *The Secret Garden*. I never could have imagined how it would expand my awareness of literary possibilities, and enrich my sense of identity.

After exploring courses on everything from music therapy to Chinese philosophy, I declared a major in Arts & Ideas in the Humanities and a minor in Gender & Health. Although I had no idea what I would do with my degree, I thrived with this balance of arts and sciences and hoped that somehow they could come together professionally. Outside the classroom, I enjoyed co-creating the RC Forums and leading campus tours for prospective students. Eventually, these extracurricular activities would also weave their way into my career.

Since graduating to the sound of bagpipes in 2010, my story has affirmed an essential RC intention, to learn and live what you love. But my journey did not unfold seamlessly. Immediately after college I volunteered with a national social justice corps, and although the work was rewarding, it was also exhausting. I developed debilitating medical conditions that no one could explain, and finally a flummoxed physician advised me to “search beyond allopathic medicine.”

Although I had no previous experience with holistic healthcare, I discovered abundant resources in Ann Arbor, just blocks away from my RC roots. As several integrative practitioners took me under their wing, both my personal and professional horizons brightened. In preparation for East Quad’s renovation, the RC offered me a new Student Affairs position designed to keep the college connected. Instantly I embraced this opportunity to return to a nurturing atmosphere and support it through its own metamorphosis.

East Quad and I experienced parallel transformations. As I guided students through summer orientations and proficiency exams, my body guided me toward sources of rejuvenation. Through an auspicious series of circumstances reminiscent of the fairy tales from my freshman seminar, I received invitations to study with esteemed healers and to publish my undergraduate poetry in a book that became *The Sound of Seeds*.

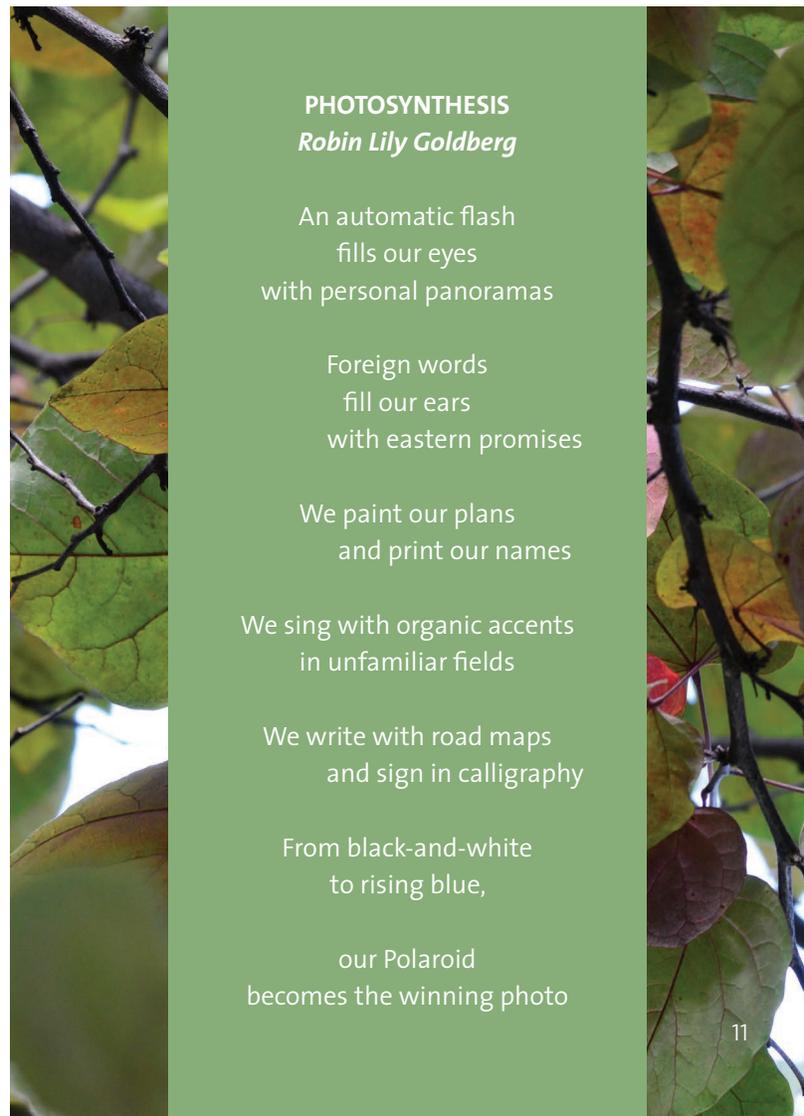
Today I fuse my humanities and health foundations from college as a holistic healthcare practitioner. I feel thankful for the RC professors who encouraged me to express my whole self creatively. I honor their message with the mantra of my private practice, “Embracing Authenticity as Healing Artistry.” My ties to these professors remain strong, and currently I collaborate with one of them on a storytelling therapy project at the U-M Hospital. I also stay connected to the campus by orchestrating workshops that empower students, staff, and faculty to balance academic success with personal wellness. Contrary to popular belief, both are possible! Through these interactive stress-relief sessions, I enjoy enabling the University community to breathe freely.

In the decade since my initial visit, I have seen the RC through both student and staff lenses. As East Quad evolved from my classroom to my office, it enhanced my appreciation and compassion for all members of this extraordinary program.

- To today’s RC students: Welcome to a safe space to explore your true self.
- To the RC staff and faculty: Thank you for cultivating this encouraging educational environment for nearly fifty years.
- To my fellow RC alums: May your RC experience continually nourish your personal and professional dreams.

In the spirit of the simple power of poetry, I will leave you with a piece I wrote for my capstone creative writing tutorial and read for my RC graduation ceremony. No matter how the Residential College has shaped your life, I hope these words speak to your experience. ■

ROBIN LILY GOLDBERG majored in RC Arts and Ideas in the Humanities.



PHOTOSYNTHESIS
Robin Lily Goldberg

An automatic flash
fills our eyes
with personal panoramas

Foreign words
fill our ears
with eastern promises

We paint our plans
and print our names

We sing with organic accents
in unfamiliar fields

We write with road maps
and sign in calligraphy

From black-and-white
to rising blue,

our Polaroid
becomes the winning photo

soft hearts, strong backbones

ERIC COUILLARD, RC '11

As non-RC as it may sound, in between my sophomore and junior year, I made up my mind that I wanted to work at Google post-graduation. So I researched and prepared myself for that for over a year. My senior year I had an interview, and by October I already had an offer.

I was pretty surprised—and empowered. “If I can get a job at Google,” I thought, “what else can I pull off?” I put together my interests at the time—film, kung fu, and China. And I decided my next big goal would be to move to China and act in kung fu movies.

I stayed at Google long enough to pay off my loans and save up some cash. Then I shipped out to China, with very little idea about what I was doing. I spent the first few months just training and networking. One of my first gigs was a dubbing job where I got to dub over a myriad of tiny speaking roles in a couple movies and TV shows. This included dubbing over a man who was vomiting violently for a few minutes.

While doing the dubbing work, I got a call from a kung fu master named Zhao Jilong who asked me if I wanted to go to the Shaolin Temple with him and film a documentary. Later I became the disciple of Master Zhao, who taught me Qigong—more on that later. My role in this show was to be the stupid foreigner who doesn’t believe kung fu is any good, and subsequently get my ass kicked repeatedly. It also entailed cupping an old kung fu master’s scrotum so he could prove to me he was capable of sucking it inside his body. I can now

assure you he has this capability.

The highlight of my acting career came when I got a role as a stunt man in a Jackie Chan movie called *Dragon Blade*, co-starring John Cusack and Adrien Brody. Basically my job was to swing a sword around and scream in the background of an epic battle during ancient times.

Initially, I moved to China because I didn’t want to get caught in the golden handcuffs of corporate America, not because I had a passion for acting. While there, I realized my true passion lies in the field of personal development. While I was at Google part of my job was creating and facilitating workshops in this field. When I was in China I had a gig creating online mindfulness courses for Jet Li. So the maximizing of human potential has been a common thread throughout my different career paths.

In April 2015 I moved back to the US to start a life coaching business, which integrates my Qigong practice with my passion for personal development. My mission as a coach is to soften hearts and strengthen backbones.

I’m also working with the Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies to bring Master Zhao to U-M for several workshops in the fall.

For more info on the Master Zhao workshops, you can contact Eric at coueric@umich.edu. You can also read more about his coaching practice at ericcouillard.com ■

ERIC COUILLARD majored in *Asian Studies and Organizational Studies*.



CHALLENGE + CHANGE

JEFF TIMBERLAKE, RC '91

Hello, Fellow RCers! I am a proud member of the RC class of '91, with a social science concentration. I came to know about the RC by way of a high school friend, Nick Petrie, whom I visited in the fall of 1986. I don't remember much from that visit except hanging out in East Quad and feeling insecure about how little tie dye I was wearing. But, I was sold enough to check the box on the old (paper) LS&A application form and started my journey in the summer of 1987 during orientation. There I met several people who continue to be my very best friends, including Eric Lock. I recall feeling a little stung that while the rest of the LS&A folks got to go to the CCRB, we RCers had to go to a special RC orientation meeting at the dearly departed Halfway Inn. There were a variety of speeches and skits, the latter of which were spearheaded by the spectacular, wild-haired, earringed Dave Horste, who later became my RA on 3rd Hinsdale.

Life at the RC was, in a word, transformative. I grew up in the 1970s and 1980s in a center-left family in a center-left town. But nothing in my upbringing prepared me for the deep challenges I would receive to my beliefs about race, class, gender, sexuality, and epistemology. The late 1980s were a time when taken-for-granted assumptions about those issues were being challenged by individuals and groups at UM and elsewhere. Occasionally those challenges veered into the rocky terrain of political correctness, but I recall rarely feeling threatened with censorship or that I couldn't express an opinion, even if unpopular. I get the sense that twitter is changing that somewhat, so it will be interesting to see where these debates go in the next five to ten years.

After the RC I moved to DC in 1991 with my then-fiancee Shauna to accompany her while she began a graduate program at George Washington. I temped for a while and then worked at the World Bank as a secretary and research assistant. At some point in the early '90s Shauna was considering applying to a PhD program in anthropology at the University of Wisconsin. I had been getting interested in issues of homelessness and urban poverty during my last year or so at



the RC, mostly thanks to Charlie Bright's Detroit seminar. Living in DC during the post-Reagan years gave plenty of opportunity to see the ravages of neoliberalism and state retrenchment on the lives of DC's poor. So, when I leafed through Shauna's UW-Madison course guide, I noticed many courses in urban issues in the sociology department. This led me to think about starting a PhD program in sociology. I researched schools with an

urban focus and found that the University of Chicago was considered to be the leader in the field. I applied there and was accepted without funding, which was untenable, so I started at UW-Madison in the fall of 1994. There I developed a love for the discipline and for the rigors of social science research, but I never got Chicago out of my brain and heart. So, after finishing a Master's at Madison I transferred to Chicago in the fall of 1996.

The University of Chicago was founded primarily as a graduate school, and indeed I found it to be a wonderful place to be a graduate student. We were not simply labor for teaching undergraduate classes as at many graduate schools, but rather the *raison d'être* of the whole place. I loved it so much that I spent seven years there, graduating in 2003 with a PhD. During the course of my time in Chicago our two daughters were born. Frances and Jemma were born in the early 2000s and now are brilliant, complicated teenagers.

After Chicago I took a faculty job in the sociology department at the University of Cincinnati, where I have been since 2003. Cincinnati is a lovely river city that formed part of the German triangle with St. Louis and Milwaukee, my home town. So while it is swampier and more southern than Milwaukee, it felt like home from the beginning.

That more or less brings us up to the present. I'm glad to stay in touch with the RC via the work of Cynthia Burton, as well as my pals Gerry O'Brien and Emily (Hamilton) Veader, who have spearheaded class of '91 reunions every five years since we graduated. I'm looking forward to seeing them this summer as we celebrate our 25th! Peace and love to all RC students, faculty, and graduates. ■

JEFFREY TIMBERLAKE *majored in RC Social Sciences.*

“The Migrant Outreach course opened my eyes to the realities that Latino immigrants face in the U.S. I would not be doing the work I do today if it wasn’t for this course. Seeing the injustices within our immigration system and the treatment of the workers at the camps, were what led me to decide to dedicate my career to advocating against those injustices, and creating larger systemic change in our communities.” —Becca Telzak, 2007



TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION: **THE MIGRANT OUTREACH PROGRAM**

BY MABEL RODRIGUEZ





During the Outreach Program I volunteered with ELL where I had conversation tables with International Students from the University of Michigan. Then a year or so after that I did a study abroad in Tanzania and taught a little ESL... I am leaving for the Peace Corps to teach ESL in High School. The whole program kinda changed me, especially when I look back on it.

- Vashti Armstrong, 2015

The Migrant Outreach program reflects the tenets of RC education: scholarship, critical thinking, and engaged citizenship. It attempts to provide students with opportunities to reflect on systemic issues affecting the migrant farmworker community, and the socioeconomic and political factors that created the system in our country, as well as analyze different approaches for confronting such inequalities.

The academic component of the program, RCSSCI 395, focuses on understanding and contextualizing the plight of migrant farmworkers through academic discussion of historical, political, and socioeconomic factors. The subject matter is approached interactively as students discuss articles and films, and listen to invited speakers, which in past years have included representatives from the Michigan Department of Labor, the Department of Agriculture, Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), MHP Salud (mhpsalud.org), and Migrant Legal Services, among others.

During the field work component of the program [RCSSCI 396], students visit camps in Southeastern Michigan and teach English as Second Language to adults as well as literacy and crafts to children. By means of engaged learning, students have the opportunity to enhance their understanding of the migrant farmworker community by means of direct interaction with the individual workers and community agencies that serve them. The combination of hands-on experience, academic understanding, and critical reflection can be transformative for many students.

“The Migrant Outreach course did not simply impact my life. It changed it profoundly... Since completing the Migrant Outreach course, I have provided in-class support services to kindergarten an elementary school-aged children of migrant workers in southeast Michigan, taught ESL to undocumented and unaccompanied minor refugees living with foster families in Detroit, and spent five years as an adult ESL instructor for the Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest in the nation. Many of my LAUSD students either grew up in a migrant family or have been employed as migrant workers in California’s vast agricultural industry.” – Fannie Weinstein, 2009

The initial emphasis on scholarship is essential for the success of the program and provides a critical understanding of the system, its historical roots, and its complexity. Fannie Weinstein, a student in the 2009 program stated, it “prepares students for the teaching component of the course, which takes them out of the classroom and into the field... As a result of the deep historical and cultural understanding gained during the first half of the course, the students are that much more prepared to begin the field component.”

“Through the practice of cultural exchange, I recognized and felt my positionality in the world in which differences are impacted by racism, classism, sexism, youth oppression, and linguistic discrimination (among manifestations of oppression). I thought I had known enough because of my own experiences as a first-generation Asian/ Korean-American in a working class family. I was wrong and proven wrong in such a way through the Program... In other words, I was impacted by the program through a change of mind.” – Eun Lee, 2011

On the other hand, the knowledge gained through class discussion and reflections also equips students to educate their own community. “The main thing that stands out is how much I learned over the course of the spring and summer that year. It was 7 years ago and I can still talk anyone’s ear off about the vast social complexities affecting the migrant farmer community across the United States,” adds Amy Halter, 2009.

Equally important is the interplay between facts and reality, an interplay that heightens our consciousness of what these facts really mean for this community. “While I would love seeing some of the same families year after year and have the opportunity to build a relationship with them, it was heartbreaking seeing them working and living in the same awful conditions each year. I also remember being in shock seeing the living conditions in the camps. I remember seeing the kids with dirt under their nails, knowing that they most likely missed school that day in order to help their families in the field,” says Becca Telzak, 2007.

In addition, by taking students out from their “university bubble” and thrusting them into a different community, it is necessary for each student to develop skills that will facilitate their integration. They will need to learn to collaborate, to negotiate, to be aware of their own abilities and limitations, to create and achieve objectives, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to any situation. Through this process some begin to question their professional interests and aspirations. Others question their personal beliefs as well as their position in society.

Transformative education is the essence of the Residential College, and the Migrant Program is just one example of our successes in providing students with opportunities for self-transformation and the subsequent transformation of the communities they have served for the past 50 years. Unfortunately, much of this transformation is personal and can take place long after the completion of the course, and thus professors are not privy to it. So, I thank our students for having the courage to participate in our courses with an open mind and generous spirit, and for letting us see how transformative education works at the Residential College. ■

MABEL RODRIGUEZ teaches in the RC Intensive Spanish Language Program.



CREATIVITY

BY JEFF EVANS

In a previous *RC News* I described preconceptions students bring to my classes on creative process, for example, that creativity is just about art, or the individual, or divergent thinking. In contrast is the complexity of the creative process that includes not only the arts, the solitary person, or an open mind, but interests, passions, motives, perceptions, memories, goals, relationships, identity—everything we are. So when it comes to creativity and the brain, “where” in the brain is actually the wrong question; a “location” for creativity in the brain implies a process that is too simple, that denies the creator is a person. However, many students do want to know more about the brain (which includes the where and what of anatomy), and besides, they come with varying degrees of preparation—some with a major in BCN and some with only a unit in high school biology. They may be future scientists, artists, or both, or they may just be fascinated with how biology can be so complex as to be intimately involved with all that we think, feel, and, ultimately, create.

In neuroscience the doctrine of “localization of function” (specific brain areas for specific functions) was for many years in conflict with “mass action,” that functions of the person involve the whole brain. In the last half century or so, with increasingly sophisticated experimental design and imaging technologies, these doctrines were blended into the “network”; that is, behaviors, including creativity, involve networks of brain areas in conversation with each other. For example, brain areas for vision (what we see with our eyes) are in conversation with memory and expectation, with mood, with goals, and with much else that contributes not just to what we see, but to its meaning.

This Summer I’m reading a terrific new book by psychologist Arne Dietrich of the American University in Beirut, *How Creativity Happens in the Brain*¹. In it he challenges simple conceptions of creativity and goes on to apply the idea of networks to creative behavior. The point is not to create another brain “location” for creativity (i.e. a network as just a complicated location). The point is to highlight the conversation



—rather, the many conversations that take place continually among the multitude² of voices of our mind and brain. This is in line with the experience of creating in which the creative product can come from any number of the many parts of ourselves, and therefore from many parts of the brain.

So back to the diversity of students who come to study creativity—scientists, artists and those in between. When we study or teach about the brain and creativity we start with the behavior—creating in all its aspects. The brain itself is mute until engaged with the mouth, the breath, the hands, the limbs, those other organs which translate what is inside to something we can share. We start with behavior because all of us, regardless of background, know something about the behavior of creating (even if we’re not sure about our own “creativity”). Starting with the behavior, we then ask what the brain must be like to provide for it³. Hypothesizing what the brain must be like—in the organization of its networks, for example—tells neuroscientists how to look to determine if what we hypothesize comes anywhere close to accounting for the complexity of the behavior that we know.

A version of that complexity, which many of us experience (or can detect if we pay attention), is the interplay of conscious and non-conscious events that result during the making of something—whatever it may be. As we pay attention to the flow of thoughts we sense, in creating, the interplay of conscious effort and the arising of seemingly random non-conscious thoughts, feelings, images, etc. This suggests that one conversation among parts of our mind and brain may have something to do with effort and relaxation. Centuries

of human experience and recent research have revealed this interplay and have linked them to what you might call super-networks involving a system of conscious control on the one hand and a “default”⁴ system of ongoing free associations. In the creative process, conscious effort is expended and non-conscious processes contribute—each made up of multiple parties to the conversation, and each in conversation with the other.

So creativity is not simple. It’s not just about art, although it’s also about art; it’s not just about that dreamy, free-floating default state of consciousness, although it’s about that too; it’s not just about focusing attention and figuring things out, although it’s also about that. And when we’ve cultivated the conversations among them, it’s how they inform each other. Then, as always, it’s up to us. ■

JEFF EVANS teaches in the RC Social Theory and Practice Program.

Notes

1. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. If you don’t want to commit to the book, look up A. Dietrich, Who’s afraid of a cognitive neuroscience of creativity? *Methods*, 42, (2007) 22-27.
2. Dietrich calls this a “parliament” of voices, perhaps to highlight competition for influence on what eventually reaches consciousness.
3. For the word “provide” I credit my colleague Ned Kirsch and our many conversations on the relationship between the brain and the person.
4. This has been called the default system because it kicks in when we’re not focusing or paying attention to anything in particular. When the default system is active, attention is free-floating, and it is a time, sometimes called incubation, when things come to mind that might relate to what we were earlier paying attention to.



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RC Deutsches Theater and Intensive
German class travels to various locations
in Germany each spring.