Let’s Chat

The art of thoughtful conversation

College Connections is a listening project designed to collect oral histories and feedback. We collect our data through interviews, transcribe them in an internal database, and then interpret our data meaningfully. Feedback is shared with the dean to encourage investment in opportunities for growth.
We’ve interviewed 469 people.

65 parents were first-time parents of college students.

We’ve interviewed both LSA alumni and parents of current LSA students. Throughout the report, you’ll notice that our data is labeled alumni views or parent views, which serves as your identification guide. Note: For those of you who are alumni and parents, you’ll be represented in the alumni views category only. In addition, student data is gathered from parents and will be noted with a parent views label.

Quotes from our experts reflect academic and experiential support for our work.
Generative conversation allows us to get to know each other by establishing common bonds. By finding mutual ground, we can break-down the early barriers, so that our conversation can be honest and candid.

From the expert: I often find that if you ask someone directly if they have an idea to share, they can be hesitant because they are intimidated. Generative conversations build trust that helps you get to something deeper. By really listening and showing the speaker that you value what they’re saying, they begin to have more self-confidence. That’s an amazing thing and it’s why I love the work we do here in LSA! ”
— Jeff Sorensen, Director for Social Innovation

WHAT BROUGHT STUDENTS TO U-M AND LSA

CURRENT STUDENTS
1. Academic reputation
2. Big Ten School
3. Campus atmosphere

ALUMNI
1. Academic reputation
2. Family/Friend Connection
3. Raised in Michigan

WHAT ALUMNI STUDIED
17% English
11% Economics
11% Political Science
9% History
9% Psychology

EXTRACURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT

ALUMNI
35% Work
26% Greek Life
14% Intramural Sports

CURRENT STUDENTS
51% Greek Life
19% Volunteering
17% Internships

WHERE ALUMNI WORK
Reflective Conversations help us become more self-aware and also more socially aware of others and society as we choose our adult life pathways. One of the most important goals of the college experience is to find purpose and meaning in one’s life. As an alum, having reflective conversations helps to shed light on the path that one took in college and the relationships one developed with friends and faculty, bringing clarity and insight to one’s purpose and direction as an independent adult and professional.

—David Schoem, Director of Michigan Community Scholars Program & Adjunct Associate Professor

Advice to Parents from Parents

- Encourage your student to find community: 38%
- Encourage your student to get involved: 33%
- Help your student prepare for the climate: 29%

Advice to Students from Alumni

- Explore U-M: 69%
- Leave your comfort zone: 36%
- Have fun: 29%

Campus Highlights from Alumni and Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Atmosphere</th>
<th>Sports and Spirit Classes</th>
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Where the College Thrives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alumni Views</th>
<th>Parent Views</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic reputation: 63%</td>
<td>U-M community: 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni network: 23%</td>
<td>Academic quality: 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of excellence: 21%</td>
<td>Individualized Attention Provided: 12%</td>
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How LSA Influences Life After Graduation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Alumni Views</th>
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<tr>
<td>Provides critical thinking skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepares you for working hard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develops a solid foundation</td>
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Our conversations are incomplete unless we ask how the college can grow. As LSA adjusts to a changing world, it must be agile while continuing to maintain its integrity.

**WHAT WE’RE DOING NOW**

**Department reports** are sent annually to LSA departments. We share notes on alumni who would like to get involved and other feedback we gather to get folks engaged directly. This includes ways to make the curriculum more relevant, better preparing students for life after college.

We continue to work with the **LSA Opportunity Hub** to provide career and internship opportunities to our current students, while also finding ways to engage our alumni with current students.

We have **quarterly check-ins** with college leaders, including the dean, updating them on what we hear in the field.

Through continued commitment to the **College Connections** program, the college garners a fuller understanding of the historical, and current, state of the school. By finding campus partners, it continues to share feedback with the appropriate stakeholders.

**From the expert:** I’ve had experience with students who interview well because they are able to critique a company and its implications for consumers. They have a bigger perspective that allows them to not only include course content, but also consider the organization’s greater role in society. By identifying opportunities for growth, they show that they have a vision.”

— Lisa Nakamura, Director of the Digital Studies Institute

**COMMON CONCERNS ABOUT U-M AND LSA**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Alumni Views</th>
<th>Parent Views</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordability of Higher Education</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Size of U-M</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Viability of Liberal Arts in Economy</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advising Services</td>
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<td>Student’s Ability to Find Community</td>
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<td>Career Services</td>
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Thank you, Liz Cole

College Connections greatly appreciates the leadership Liz Cole provided during this time of transition for the college. While maintaining the college’s commitment to academic preeminence, she also championed inclusive campus dialogue. We wish her the best of luck in all of her future endeavors!

WELCOME TO OUR NEW DEAN

Anne Curzan has been named the dean of LSA, effective September 1. Since 2015 Anne has served as associate dean for the humanities. She is an Arthur F. Thurnau professor, the Geneva Smitherman Collegiate Professor of English Language and Literature, and is also a professor in LSA’s Department of Linguistics and at U-M’s School of Education. Many of you also know her as a delightful guide to the English language on Michigan Radio’s weekly “That’s What They Say” segment.

Since we last talked
TEAM UPDATES

Selena Joarder graduated from LSA in May 2018 with an A.B. in organizational studies. Selena began her time at U-M in the Michigan Community Scholars Program, which gave her experience in encouraging meaningful engagement. She also promoted student philanthropy on campus by working with the Gifts of Kindness Fund, and fundraised with FeelGood, a national nonprofit. Learning from the Center for Positive Organizations, she studied research-based strategies to build authentic relationships. Her love of meeting new people, combined with a genuine belief that a liberal arts education allows people to be their best, compelled her to join the team.

Kai Mason graduated from LSA in May 2019 with an A.B. in English. The newest member of the team, she transferred to U-M from Michigan State University and began her Michigan tenure in the Global Scholars Program, where she was a Dialogue Facilitator and Resident Advisor. Throughout her college career, she served as president and competing member of U of M Slam Poetry, was an optiMize grant and fellowship recipient, and the first graduate of the Honors in Engaged Liberal Arts program, an interdisciplinary thesis track from LSA’s Honors College. With a love of storytelling and travel, she is excited by the opportunity to connect with alumni and help enhance her alma mater.

Anna Thompson graduated from LSA in May 2016 with an A.B. in communication studies. At U-M, Anna was a leader of Appreciate + Reciprocate, a philanthropic student organization that volunteers and fundraises in the community. She held internships with the Ella Sharp Museum of Jackson and later the Development Summer Internship Program where she worked in alumni relations. Anna also worked with the Michigan Association of Communication Studies to provide professional development opportunities for students interested in media-related career paths. Anna was inspired to work in alumni relations after meeting the alums who funded her undergraduate scholarship, realizing the powerful impact relationship building can have on the future of the college.

Farewell to Joe

Joe Murray (2016-2018) left the College Connections program in November 2018 to join the LSA Major Giving team. He now meets with alumni and donors in the Chicago region, joyfully connecting more people to LSA.
Connect with LSA

Provide an Internship or Career Opportunity
Share Your Expertise
Join the LSA Young Alumni Council
Mentor a Student
Serve as an Online Ambassador
Give to the LSA Annual Fund
Leave a Legacy Gift

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