

MICHIGAN COMMUNITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

FALL 2017

CONTENTS

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE...2

UPCOMING EVENTS...3

2017 RECAP...4-6

ALUMNI PROFILES...7-11



Letter from the Directors

Time and again this fall, our students have told us how important it is to them to live and study in this engaged, diverse community (1st year cohort – 63% students of color and international students; 22% low income; 15% 1st Gen) that values dialogue, difference, and a commitment to social justice. Our students have found in MCSP a welcome home and family apart from the anger, fear, and polarization they have experienced at times on campus and beyond. We need your support more than ever – your support is essential for sustaining and strengthening our diversity, service, and community building initiatives!

The MCSP community rallied to repaint "the rock" after it was defaced by hateful language written over painting by Latinx students. Then our MCSP community came together in unity to stand for social justice and against racial hatred after a person(s) wrote hateful, racist words on the residence hall doors of three of our MCSP African American student leaders. We have held community meetings, intergroup dialogues, open houses, MCSPfamily nights, all to help our students feel that MCSP represents home, family, and community at UM.

We are so proud for MCSP's national recognition as a result of Dr. Beverly Tatum, President-Emerita of Spelman College and author of her newly revised book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, writing about MCSP as a model of hope and progress throughout the U.S. See Dr. Tatum speak about MCSP on her book tour at Harvard U. and colleges across the country (see minutes 42:45-47) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WM-pw_-vjvY

We are very excited to announce that we are working with the new LSA Opportunity Hub to develop a streamlined process for MCSP alumni to offer internships and mentoring for MCSP students. More information will follow. Our MCSP Regional Alumni Groups are taking shape – David will be visiting the DC club in January, and we look forward to events being planned in the Detroit Metro and Chicago areas. Please let us know if you'd like to take a leadership role in Ann Arbor, Atlanta, Boston, New York, or California.

Please think MCSP when making your charitable donations – including Giving Blue Day.

<https://lsa.umich.edu/mcsp/parents-alumni-friends/donate-to-mcsp.html>

We've had so many welcome visits this year, including our 1st homecoming reception – we'd love to hear from you! We know you'll love the inspiring alumni spotlights and current student updates in our newsletter. It's important to keep ties to MCSPers who hold a hopeful, equitable and peaceful vision of life together across our different backgrounds.



David Schoem
Director

Wendy Woods
Associate Director



Things we're excited for

GIVING

BLUEDAY

11.28.17

Giving Blueday - November 28, 2017

For the first time ever, MCSP will participate in the University of Michigan's Giving Blueday! We are very excited about this opportunity to give back to our students and community. On November 28, there will be a number of matching opportunities and various fundraising challenges for all to participate in. We are hoping you will consider donating to MCSP on Giving Blueday to support our mission in creating spaces for students to explore issues of social justice and community engagement.

For more information, please visit <https://givingblueday.org/> for more information about the specific fundraising challenges and opportunities. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Katie Avila at avilak@umich.edu. Thank you all so much for your continued support!

To donate, visit our fundraising link [here](#).



MCSP students and staff bond over their love of the University of Michigan. Go Blue!



Nonviolent Action Workshop

This year, MCSP sponsored and collaborated with campus departments and programs to welcome Hardy Merriman, President, and Deborah Mathis, Director of Communications, of the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict to host an all-day workshop on nonviolent conflict and protest. Students, staff, and faculty joined MCSP to learn about national and international examples of nonviolent movements struggling for rights, freedom, and justice; key research about the effectiveness and outcomes of nonviolent movements; movements strategy, tactics, and communications; and different roles and leadership within nonviolent movements.



MCSP is excited about upcoming collaborations with the program on Intergroup Relations to help create a positive and just campus climate.

This Year in MCSP

Peer Advisors for Community Service (PACS)



Houses become homes: PACS leads service with Ronald McDonald House, Alpha House, and Mercy House.

MCSP students have learned the importance of having a home and feeling you belong through their service with three Ann Arbor houses this fall. The PACS have led students three times this fall to Ronald McDonald House to prepare and serve meals for families who reside there while their children receive medical care at Mott's Children's Hospital. Students have gone to Alpha House, a transitional but supportive home for families experiencing homelessness, to play with children. At Mercy House, where a local woman opened her private home to men and women experiencing homelessness, our students are moved by the amazing stories of people too often ignored in our community.

- PACS welcomed Bill Alt as the new Coordinator for Community Engagement
- PACS establishes new mentoring relationship with Scarlett Middle School
- Led trips to Earthworks Urban Farm in Detroit, Growing Hope in Ypsilanti, and Michigan's own Campus farm to explore connection between sustainability, food security, and social justice.



MCSP seeks to understand the experience of refugees and asylum seekers.

For over thirty years, men and women fleeing torture and violence in their home country, seeking freedom and justice, have found a safe haven at Freedom House in Detroit. Freedom House provides asylum seekers a home and services to help them establish a new life in the United States. MCSP students learn so much about the world, themselves, and the necessity for compassion and solidarity on their monthly visits to Freedom House.

This Year in MCSP

Programming Board (PB&U)



MCSP students making glitter jars to de-stress at a recent MCSPhell Good Event



We are always thankful for our MCSPhamily!



MCSP students on a recent trip to Cedar Point

PB&U has been hard at work programming and planning events to help build and foster welcoming communities for students to develop a foundation of trust, vulnerability, and excitement in MCSP. Between MCSPhamily nights, MCSPhell Good self-care events, and trips to events, they have created a place for all to feel welcome and at home here at MCSP. They have more events planned for this year, including MCPistons Game, collaborative events across campus, and of course, more Phamily Nights. PB&U will continue to create spaces for all to feel a sense of belonging and care within MCSP through all that they do!



Students writing notes of gratitude and making hand turkeys for loved ones.



Peer leaders making stress balls to keep them relaxed during midterms.

PB&U welcomes the new Coordinator for Community Building and Programming, Katie Avila.

This Year in MCSP

Intergroup Relations Council (IRC)

Led by Amanda Champagne, Coordinator for Diversity Initiatives, IRC has had a busy and exciting semester this year hosting many dialogues, events, and field trips! Dialogues are facilitated by two or three IRC peer advisors and they have covered a broad range of topics so far including race issues and hate crimes on campus, cultural appropriation, and civic engagement. IRC has also hosted a few big events this semester including our 2nd Annual MCSPhestifoods in collaboration with PB&U, a fun cultural event where the community tries food from different cultures and engage in dialogue while sharing a meal.



Detroit Day

This past weekend, IRC and a group of MCSP first year students braved the cold for a Detroit Day field trip. They toured the Charles H. Wright African American Museum, explored Downtown, visited Southwest (Mexicantown) for lunch, and had a great time learning about the history and culture of Detroit.

Peer Mentors

The peer mentors are having another amazing year with the MCSP first years. Regularly having group dinners and hanging out in the lounges, the peer mentors are working hard to create bonds with the first year students and continue to build community in the halls.



Alumni Spotlight

Highlighting the achievements of MCSPeople

Ariste Sallas-Brookwell MCSP, 2005-2009



What have you been up to since graduation?

Since I graduated in 2009, I've lived in Washington, DC. The city has become home, especially because there are so many fellow MCSP'ers in the area. I attended Catholic University for my Master of Social Work (MSW) degree. I stay active in my free time with the University of Michigan Alumni Club in DC (I've been a board member for three years) and as a Case Manager for the DC Abortion Fund (DCAF), an organization that provides funding to people who cannot cover the full cost of their abortion. I also love to cook and bake, and do so often, usually in the company of MCSP friends. There is nothing that makes me happier than sitting down to a meal with loved ones.

What are you currently doing now?

I'm a macro social worker. I work in public health with a focus on reproductive health - specifically, preventive health care. My job is to build coalitions among groups that may have competing priorities but share a goal of improving the health and well-being of women. It's challenging and rewarding work, especially in this political climate.

How do you integrate social justice into your life post college?

Social justice has served as the foundation for much of what I've dedicated my time to post-college. My decision to become a social worker was informed by the belief that systems of oppression, discrimination, and inequality need to be dismantled. I want to be a part of the coalition that works towards the goals of a more just and diverse society. Being engaged in my local community means that I can work towards those goals with other people who share the same values and who strive for a better, safer, and more equitable world.

What is your favorite memory about MCSP?

I can't pick just one - so instead, I'll go big picture. The relationships that were formed have been the most meaningful legacy of my time in MCSP. Wendy and David created a warm, welcoming, and engaged community, and out of that came many special friendships. In Washington, DC, there is a strong contingent of MCSP alumni. We lean on one another during times that are challenging, and we have continued the dialogue that began in Couzens Hall all those years ago.

Alumni Spotlight

Highlighting the achievements of MCSPeople

Ann Kim MCSP, 2003-2005

What have you been up to since graduation?

Lots more school! I got my masters in counseling. At that time I lived in DC and explored the city with other Michigan alum and of course other MCSPers. Some of the things I did was pop into various Smithsonian's in between classes and I even got to go to Obama's first inauguration. After the masters program and working at an alternative high school, I went back to PhD school. Graduated from that and then was a postdoc research associate for 2 years.

What are you currently doing now?

I just started a new job as a professor in Human Development at California State Univ, Long Beach!

How do you integrate social justice into your life post college?

I am teaching an adolescent development class this semester so I have incorporated readings on different communities and lead discussions around diversity every week.

What is your favorite memory about MCSP?

So many memories! I'll share a sweet one- One of my favorite memories is coming home from classes and meetings and cramming around a dinner table in the dining hall. The table was only supposed to seat 6 but we never just sat 6. Dinner was never planned. We all would just show up when we did and scoot over to make space. I think our record was something like 12 or 14. Dinner would always end up being 2 hours for me because I'd want to share my day and hear about everyone else's day.



Alumni Spotlight

Highlighting the achievements of MCSPeople

DAN GREEN

MCSP, 2010-2016



What have you been up to since graduation?

I worked as the Coordinator for Diversity Initiatives for two years after I graduated from undergrad. I attended the School of Social Work here at Michigan, receiving my MSW in April 2016. Since my days with MCSP have ended, I am currently a Hall Director for South Quad and Fletcher Hall. I am in my second year of this position.

What is your favorite memory about MCSP?

There are so many I can choose from, but I have to go back to my time as Donovan McKinney's roommate, one of my best friends to this day. Our room was like a MCSP Lounge my sophomore year as many people in the community would stop by to listen to music, chat, laugh and listen to Big Sean courtesy of Donovan. I had many great conversations on First Hayden in East Quad that year. Sometimes I wish I could go back to what seemed to be a much simpler time.

What are you currently doing now?

As a Hall Director, I supervise the Residential Staff in the building. I help them in supporting students to meet their emotional, mental, academic and physical needs. Every day as a Hall Director looks different and I am always challenged to think of new ways to support students. I welcome it and look to continue to grow as would like to make a career of working in student affairs.



How do you integrate social justice into your life post college?

Social justice is a core value of working in Residence Education along with restorative justice and community development. In my work life and personal life I strive to promote a spirit of diversity, equity and inclusion. These have seemingly become buzzwords on our campus but I see the importance of them as I have transitioned from a student to staff member here. We must continue working to create spaces where students feel like they belong so people can do more than survive here. I want everyone here to thrive.



Alumni Spotlight

Highlighting the achievements of MCSPeople

Najia Sheikh Khalid MCSP, 2002-2003

What have you been up to since graduation?

Following graduation in the post 9/11 world, after experiencing first-hand the rise in Islamophobia and the change in societal attitudes toward non U.S. citizens/those who appeared to be non U.S. citizens at a campus as diverse and progressive as UofM, I decided to pursue a legal career. I joined the world's largest business immigration law firm as a paralegal in its Manhattan office. Three years later, I started law school to begin my journey toward becoming an immigration attorney. I continued working in business immigration as a full time law student. I also served as a Student Attorney for the school's Immigration Justice Clinic, where I represented indigent immigrants in complex removal proceedings, including immigration raid detainees, women with claims under the Violence Against Women Act, and asylees seeking immigration relief. Although I was a recession JD graduate, I was fortunate enough to continue my legal career in immigration law and gain significant experience which laid the foundation for my current role managing an immigration practice.

What are you currently doing now?

I am Counsel and Co-Chair of Immigration and Nationality Law and Compliance Practice at Wiggin and Dana LLP, a regional law firm based in Connecticut with offices in multiple states. Practicing primarily in the area of business immigration law, I represent national and multinational employers of all sizes and individual entrepreneurs in a wide array of industries. I advise on the international transfer of employees and related compliance items to help employers facilitate their workforces in the U.S. and abroad. I also serve as Co-Chair of the firm's Diversity Committee, which is focused on enhancing awareness of the significance of diversity and inclusion in connection with recruiting, retention and professional development. My husband and I recently had our first child, and now I am a "Lawyer Mom" as well.

How do you integrate social justice into your life post college?

As a British-born Pakistani American Muslim female immigration attorney in today's political climate, I regularly integrate social justice into my professional and personal life. I am a frequent speaker on immigration topics for clients and at student outreach events through PowerBridgeNY, FWD.org, and entrepreneurial networks at educational institutions such as New York University and Columbia University. I also am actively involved in various bar associations which devote significant time to social justice activities, including the American Immigration Lawyers Association (Founder & Chair of CT Chapter Corporate Practice Committee), the Connecticut Bar Association (Awards Committee, Immigration Law Committee), the South Asian Bar Associations of Connecticut and New York (CT Board of Directors).

What is your favorite memory about MCSP?

The MCSP experience was memorable throughout, mostly because of the people involved. I have many fond memories related to group meetings, seminar sessions, outreach activities, and social events, as well as related to everyday life at Couzens Hall (where MCSP was based at the time). I cannot single out a "favorite" memory. I will say that one of my favorite things was being a student activist and advocate for social justice within the MCSP community, feeling the collective energy and enthusiasm, and thinking we could change the world.



Alumni Spotlight

Highlighting the achievements of MCSPeople

Kelly Pearson MCSP, 2009-2012

What have you been up to since graduation?

I continued my studies in Ann Arbor at the U of M School of Social Work and graduated with my Masters in Social Work in December 2012, concentrating on Management of Human Services. I had an incredible field placement at IHN @ Alpha House, a family homeless shelter, that inspired me to pursue nonprofit development and fundraising. I moved to Chicago and started working as a Development Associate at Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago in 2013.

What are you currently doing now?

I have worked at Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago (NHS) for four years now. NHS provides counseling and other services to help lower-income residents buy, fix, and keep their homes. As a Senior Development Associate, I raise \$1 million annually by writing grant proposals and maintaining relationships with over 50 corporate and foundation donors. In my free time, I serve on the planning committee for a young women's mentorship program, volunteer with the Chicago chapter of the U-M Alumni Association, and try to see my MCSPhriends (near and far) as much as possible.

How do you integrate social justice into your life post college?

I try my best to stay informed about political/social issues from a diverse set of voices. I feel really grateful to be able to support the work of Neighborhood Housing Services every day. NHS has saved over 10,000 homeowners from foreclosure and created over 5,000 new homeowners. Access to affordable homeownership opportunities helps working families build assets and invest in the future of their neighborhoods.

What is your favorite memory about MCSP?

I have so many dear memories from MCSP! A few that stick out: Meeting many of my best friends while only semi-studying in the second-floor lounge in Couzens, 3 incredible ASB trips, and being an RA to the most spirited residents (you know who you are) on the ground floor of East Quad (GFL).



Stay in touch with us!



541 Thompson Street
West Quad, Office 1041
Ann Arbor, MI 48108
734.647.4860
mcsprogram@umich.edu



<https://www.facebook.com/umichmcsp/>



Instagram [@umichmcsp](https://www.instagram.com/umichmcsp)

Questions about the newsletter? Contact the editor, Katie Avila, at
avilak@umich.edu