MCSP End of Year Celebration Speech

 Hi, for those of you who don’t know me, my name is Tosin, and I am a first-year-student in MCSP. I have been asked to say a few words. MCSP has made my Michigan experience so fulfilling and special, and I cannot imagine what my first year would be like without MCSP. If you know me, I like to smile a lot, and whenever I say I’m in MCSP, I’m smiling from ear to ear. What initially attracted me to the program was its commitment to community service and its student diversity.

Some of the ways we achieved our community service goals were by going to NAP (Natural Area Preservation) one of the first few days of school, and by our UC 102 events. Many of the first-year students also jumped in and became involved in a PACS team. MCSP’s value on service learning led me to take Project Outreach with preschool children first semester. It was so rewarding that I still volunteer in a Head Start classroom at Ann Arbor Preschool and Family Center.

In addition to available service learning opportunities, what struck me, and I can imagine what struck many of us as first-year students, was how diverse the program was. There’s diversity in academic interests, where students consider home, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, and more, and from my point of view, and the diversity is observable compared to the rest of campus, even West Quad. This diversity led to a range of events attended by MCSP students this year. Some examples are the IRC Tastefest, Winter Retreat, Indian American, Indonesian, and African Student Association Culture shows, MCSPhamily nights, and PACs volunteer opportunities.

We also dedicated time this year to uphold MCSP’s value of impact on the larger U of M campus. One example is our annual MLK Circle of Unity in the diag. This year was estimated to be the *most highly attended* Circle of Unity in the event’s history with about 350 to 400 people in attendance. I got chills when we all crossed arms, held onto each other, and swayed back and forth while different singing groups performed. I was honored to work on the Circle of Unity committee with my MCSPeers, and my talented roommate Gabi who created Dr. King’s portrait.

As a student leader next year, *you can’t get rid of me yet*, I strive to promote the type of inclusive, tight-knit community, the current student leaders and RAs created for the first-years. Speaking on behalf of the first-years, I can imagine each of us has connected with every student leader in some way, whether that be through our peer mentors, a PACs club, IRC dialogue, MCSphamily night, quick hello in the hallway, or conversation in the lounge. Thank you! The transition to college is difficult, but it’s been comforting having students who were in our position not too long ago warmly welcome us to MCSP and the larger campus community.

 Last but not least, thank you to our wonderful program directors, David and Wendy, and all MCSP coordinators for taking the time to get to know each one of us and support us. Thank you for supporting our intellectual curiosity and passions, and for reaching out with opportunities on campus that we would be interested in. Personally, what I appreciated the most this year were the emails sent to MCSP students in response to the upsetting event on campus with the flyers. The email relayed how we shouldn’t get discouraged by the flyers and the staff were available to talk in their offices if needed. The MCSP value of creating a safe and accepting environment was eminent through the support network from the staff, and my peers. MCSP is such a great community because we are cognisant of people’s feelings, especially if there are tensions on campus, and respectful and empathetic people. That night of the flyers incident, I remember talking to my parents, clearly distraught. However, I told them, “I’m okay, I’m so fortunate to be in MCSP”. On the phone, I realized I was crying for the students on campus affected by the incident who *didn’t* have the community we have. Although not everyone on campus is in MCSP, they can “experience” MCSP through dialogue with someone in the program. As first-years, we’re new to campus, but MCSP has equipped us with experience talking to a diverse group of people in meaningful and substantive ways. Overall, our engagement around campus outside of MCSP has reached people, so I’ve become more and more optimistic about the way we influence campus on a daily basis.

I started my speech talking about what attracted to me to the program: community service and student diversity.When I was talking on the phone with my parents I realized what also attracted me to the program was the possibility of meeting and becoming friends with many people - I didn’t anticipate forming deep friendships so quickly. You know you’re friends they clap for you after you can trip over chairs the first 5 minutes of the MCSP winter retreat.

I can’t believe it’s the end of the year, it went by so quickly! I’m very sad when things end, but it’s not the end. Next year will be even better, the new first-years won’t know what’s in store for them. Thank you again to our program directors and coordinators. Although we will miss many of our beloved coordinators, some of whom I had such a rewarding time working with, we know the people they are going to work with are very lucky to have them. I can’t wait to spend the last few weeks with my MCSPhamily.

Thank you.