

COLLEGE CONNECTIONS
ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Unconventional Paths

In LSA's College Connections program, we have a rare opportunity to connect with alumni and parents from all around the world to ask about their Michigan experience. This Annual Report is a highlight of our project—a celebration of folks from all walks of life, on all different paths, whose stories reflect the strength of an LSA liberal arts education and point us on the path toward improving our college.

2020

AN UNCONVENTIONAL YEAR

This year, the coronavirus crisis became an unprecedented and devastating obstacle stopping the whole world in its tracks. As classes, commencements, and the bulk of university operations moved online, in our role we saw an abrupt end to our travel, missing nearly a quarter's worth of interviews.

NUMBER INTERVIEWS BY POPULATION



Fortunately, the time we didn't spend traveling gave us a chance to sustain LSA in other meaningful ways, including linking concerned students and staff to support and resources through LSA-COVID-HELP, a virtual helpline launched by the dean as a means to keep the community connected.

We've interviewed **400 people**.

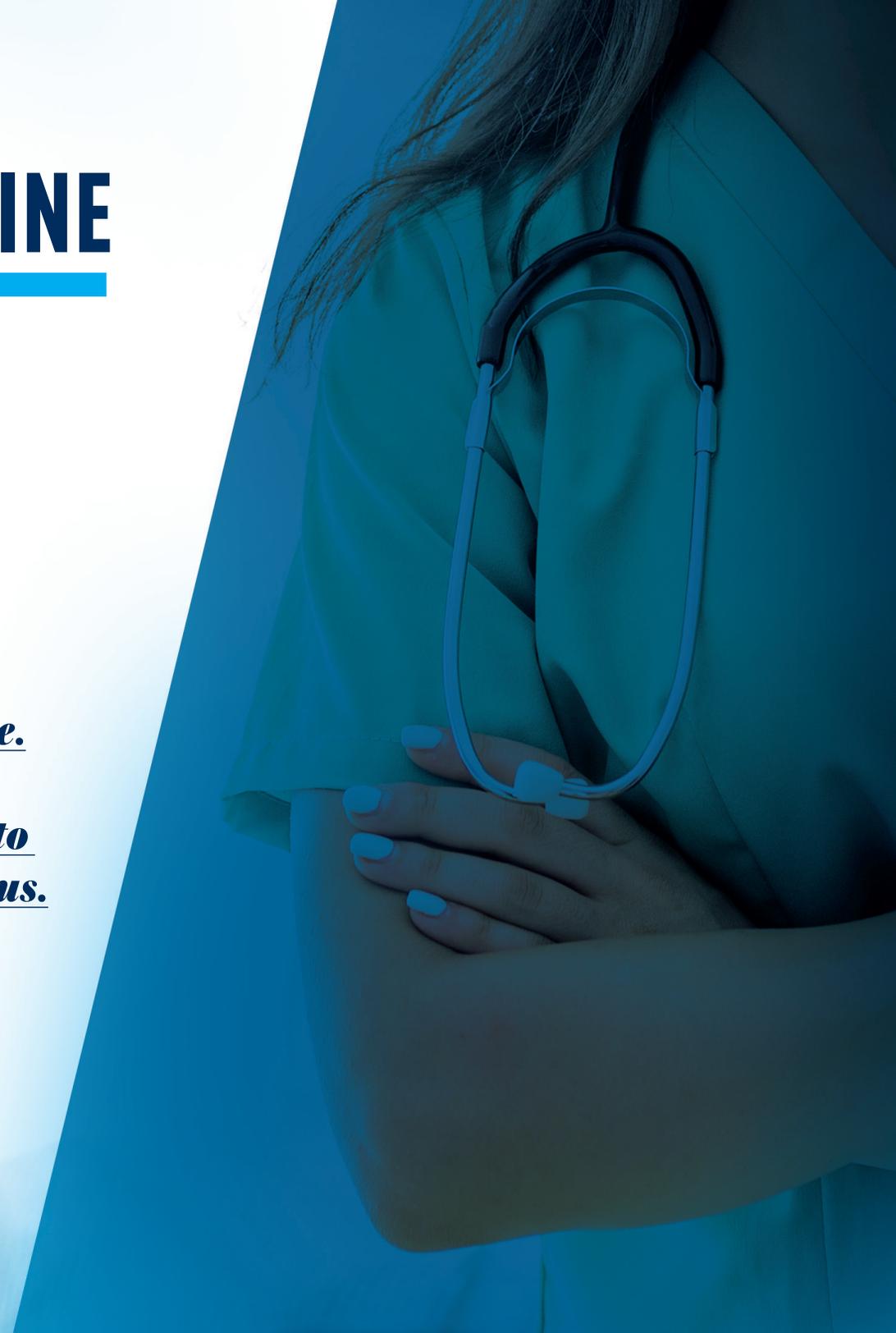


HAIL TO THE FRONT LINE

Many Wolverines are on paths that place them on the front lines of the pandemic, working as doctors, nurses, and researchers, or doing essential work with other organizations. We cannot write this without honoring the heroes among us—for them, we are incredibly grateful; of them, we are incredibly proud.

Read more about alumni on the front line.

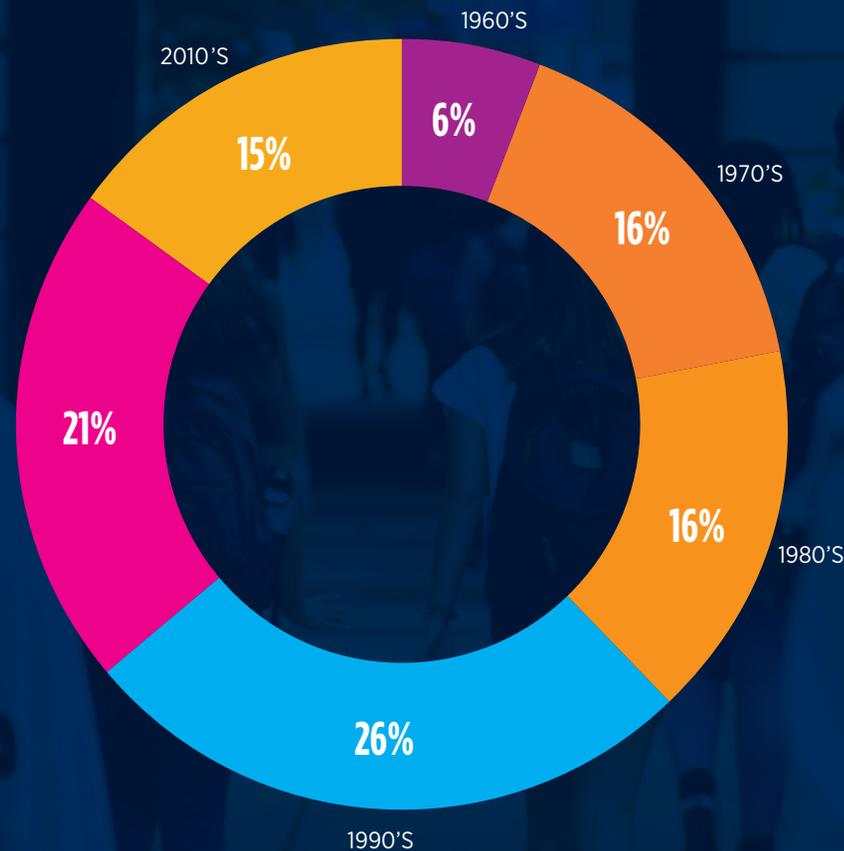
Give to the LSA Student Emergency Fund to support students impacted by coronavirus.



OBSTACLE COURSE

While the road ahead will be full of challenges for the Class of 2020, Wolverines are no stranger to overcoming difficulty. We've met alums across various decades, each of which has faced a distinct challenge often discussed in the interview.

ALUMNI GRADUATION DECADES



ON THE 2008 RECESSION:

“The economy crashed my senior year, so after flirting with the idea of finance, I decided to go straight to law school. This unplanned hurdle on the heels of my time at LSA became a formative experience—my gateway into the world.”

— Jake H. (A.B. Economics, 2009),
Assistant Chief Counsel, Memphis, TN

ON THE 1980 RECESSION:

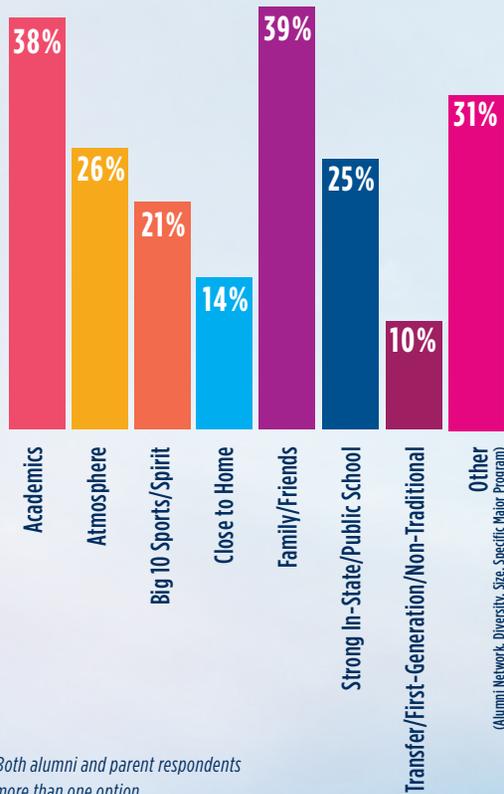
“Eighty-four was a bad time for jobs, but the negatives of not having much help became the positive of being resourceful.”

— Paul B. (B.S. Biology, 1984),
Research Scientist, Baton Rouge, LA

THE ROAD BEGINS

All paths start somewhere, so one of the first things we hope to gauge in our conversations with alumni and parents is where our students come from. Why do they choose U-M and LSA? What do they initially plan to study? This tells us what road signs are leading people to our university.

REASONS FOR CHOOSING U-M FROM PARENT AND ALUMNI DATA



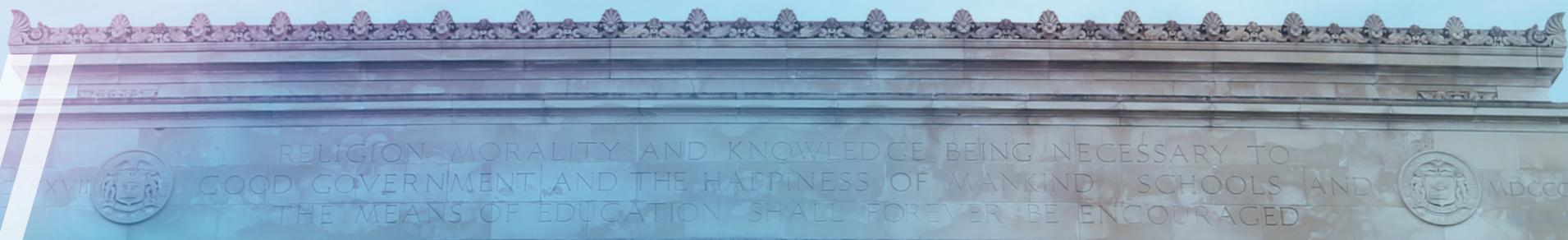
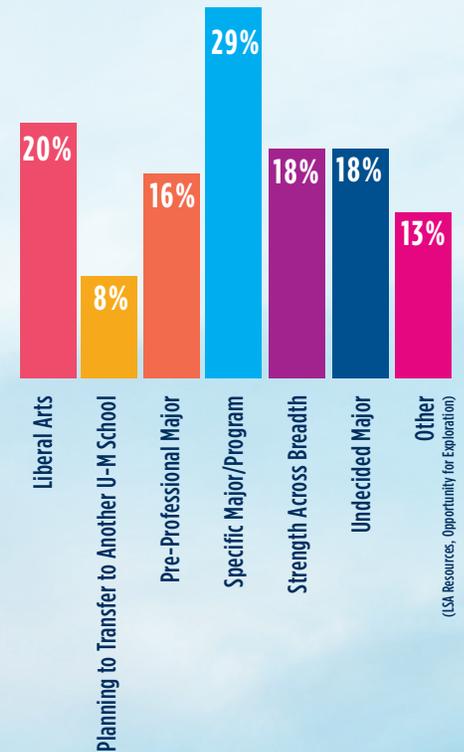
Please note: Both alumni and parent respondents could select more than one option.



I took [my daughter] up to Michigan in February, and the students were having a sit-in at the Union. A professor explained that this is what they do here: they stand up for themselves.”

—Angela K., parent, Dallas, TX

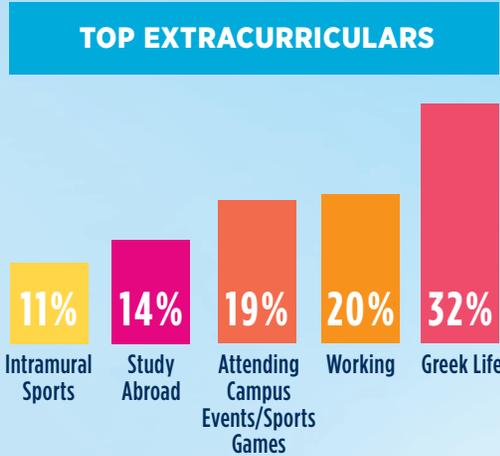
REASONS FOR CHOOSING LSA FROM PARENT DATA



ON THE JOURNEY

Paths can wind and unwind; they can make circles and then straighten out again. So what really happens in the Michigan experience? Here are some statistics from the inside perspectives of students past and present.

TOP MAJORS	
ALUMNI	Economics 11%
	Political Science 10%
	Psychology 10%
	English 8%
	History 8%



ADVICE TO STUDENTS *from alums*

Explore the university: *Get acquainted! Get involved!*

Go outside of your comfort zone: *Try new things*

Have fun!

TOP MAJORS	
STUDENTS (FROM PARENT DATA)	Economics 16%
	Biopsychology, Cognition, and Neuroscience 11%
	Political Science 9%
	Computer Science 7%
	Mathematics 7%

ADVICE TO PARENTS *from parents*

Encourage your student to find their community

Give your student time to adjust—*it'll take a second*

Visit Ann Arbor!



I would attribute my longevity as an actor to the business, marketing, and management skills I developed in LSA, but it was the entrepreneurial energy and spirit that taught me that anything was possible.”

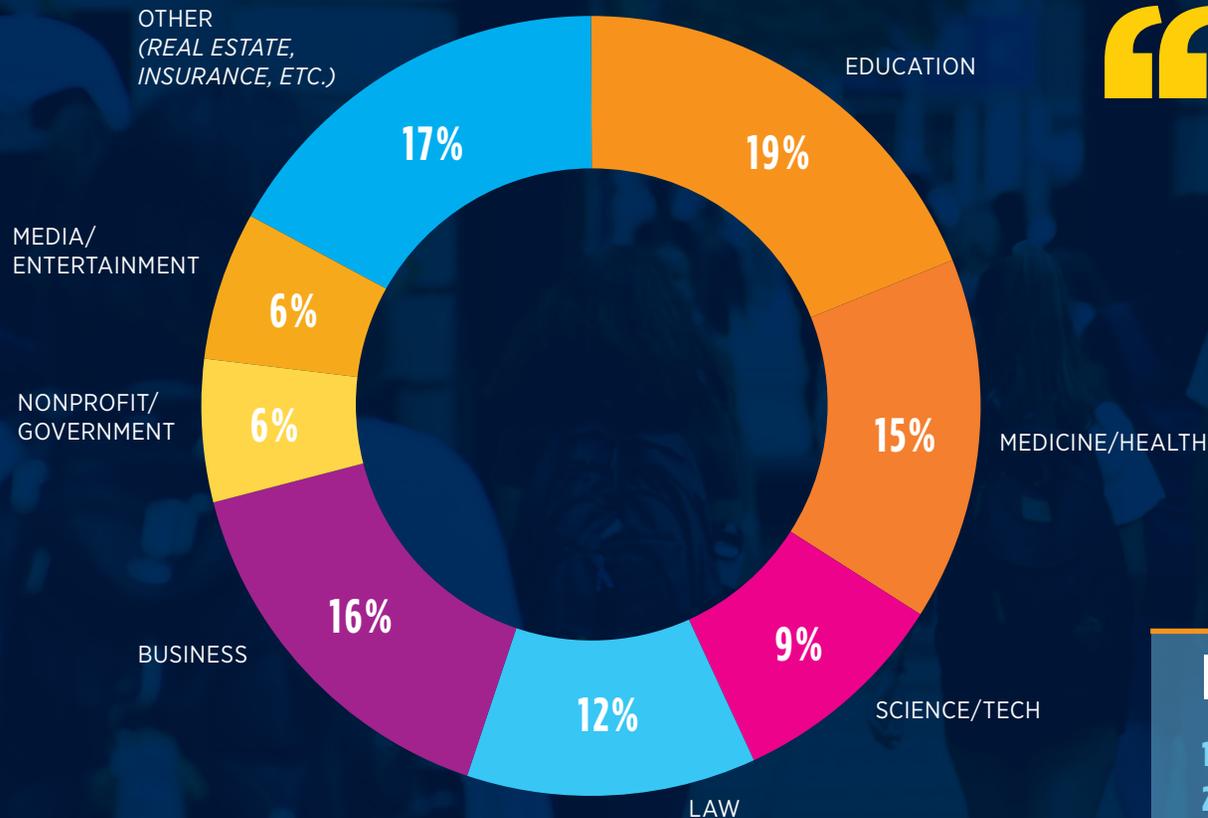
—Veronica R. (B.S. Mathematics, 1999), Actress, New York, NY



THE ROADS BEYOND

All roads lead to Michigan, they say, and based on what we hear from the folks we meet with, this certainly rings true. Here's what alums are saying about the impact of their LSA degree, in retrospect.

ALUMNI CAREER PATHS



So much of what happens in our life isn't what we plot or scheme—the best way to have a life that's full is to find what you love and let that be your guiding star.”

—Ron R. (A.B. Philosophy, 1987), Professor of Preaching, Grand Rapids, MI



[The liberal arts] provide a tool box for life and make it possible to get not only your first job but your fifth job. It's about creating citizens who are well-educated and flexible . . . and preparing them for a life in which they may have many different jobs.”

—Suzanne M., parent, Baton Rouge, LA

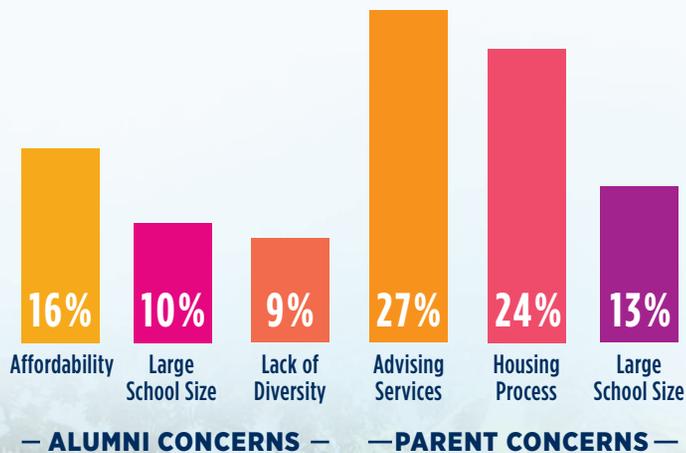
IMPACT OF AN LSA DEGREE

1. Solid Educational Foundation (33%)
2. Lasting Friendships (21%)
3. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving (19%)
4. Intellectual Exposure and Exploration (19%)
5. Confidence in Ability (17%)

LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK

Getting to where we need to go means both planning for the future and reflecting on the past. What we hear from our alumni and parents is then communicated to the dean, who uses the feedback to thoughtfully craft LSA's initiatives.

COMMON CONCERNS ABOUT U-M AND LSA



Please note: Respondents could select more than one option.

The Dean's Priorities

Exploration: Conducting bold investigation and inquiry that transforms assumptions, generates new ideas, and re-imagines the questions asked.

Common Good: Committing to a shared goal of social impact and working together to advance a more just and more sustainable future.

Inclusion: Working actively to increase access, welcome different experiences and perspectives, and build a community where every person feels a sense of purpose and belonging.

Well-Being: Recognizing that taking care of ourselves and one another is a shared responsibility, and that everyone needs support to thrive.

Integrity: Ensuring our actions are aligned with our collective values, as well as to a steadfast commitment to ethical practice.



In LSA we hone the critically important skill of seeing and understanding the world from perspectives very different from our own. That's why we read literature, and study history and art and psychology and science and so much more."

—Anne Curzan, LSA dean, Ann Arbor, MI

ABOUT THE COORDINATORS



Selena Joarder (A.B. Organizational Studies, 2018), comes from a family of Wolverines in Allen Park, MI. As a student, she was involved in philanthropy and leadership through the Michigan Community Scholars Program, Gifts of Kindness, and FeelGood, and as a fellow at the Center for Positive Organizations and the Barger Leadership Institute. In addition to conducting the bulk of College Connections' research around parents, Selena has been working with the Young Alumni Councils across the U.S.



Kai Mason (A.B. English, 2019), started at U-M as a pre-med transfer student from Michigan State's Lyman Briggs College. She became a Dialogue Facilitator and Resident Advisor in the Global Scholars Program, as well as an optiMize grant and fellowship recipient and a President of U of M Slam Poetry. As College Connections' communications chair, Kai has the pleasure of compiling the weekly Young Alumni Newsletter as well as this Annual Report.



Farewell Anna!

We bade a bittersweet goodbye to our dear Anna Thompson (A.B. Communications, 2016) as she transitioned to a new and important role as a Leadership Annual Giving Officer at Michigan Medicine.

In addition to their work connecting with young alums through networks and newsletters, Selena and Kai have been monitoring the LSA COVID-19 helpline, as well as conducting virtual interviews. They look forward to the opportunity to get back on the road to do College Connections work in person!



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[Make a planned 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.